"Bold, inspiring, and a total must-read."

—RICK REMENDER, *DEADLY CLASS*

HELLO AGAIN! MY NAME IS *JOAN PETERSON...*

...AND I ***PROBABLY*** LOVE MY ***FAMILY!***

Elsa 2023

LOVE EVERLASTING

vol.2

King **Charretier** **Hollingsworth** **Cowles**

LOVE EVERLASTING

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LOVE EVERLASTING

Created by
Tom King & Elsa Charretier

Collected Edition
Collecting LOVE EVERLASTING #6–10

6

I'VE BEEN IN LOVE A *THOUSAND* TIMES! BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN *MARRIED!*

WILL *THIS* BE THE MOMENT WHEN I *FINALLY* WALK THE AISLE AND ACCEPT MY *FATE?!*

DON'T WORRY, *CHILD.* RUNNING A LITTLE LATE IS NOT RUNNING *AWAY.* I'M *SURE* SHE'LL BE HERE SOON.

I WAS YOUNG, AND I LOVED GOING OUT AND TURNING ON! EVERY NIGHT IT WAS A DIFFERENT PARTY AND A DIFFERENT BOY, AND IT WAS ALL A THRILL! MY PARENTS OF COURSE WANTED ME TO SETTLE DOWN AND FIND THAT PERFECT LIFE MAGAZINE FUTURE, THEY'D EVEN SET ME UP WITH THEIR IDEAL GUY, BUT I KEPT TELLING THEM I WAS...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

TOM KING
WRITER
ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST
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COLORIST
CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

I CAN'T BELIEVE MOM MADE ME BRING *HIM* TO THE PARTY! I WISH HE WOULD JUST GO AWAY AND LET ME LIVE MY *OWN LIFE!*

I WAS IN MY SECOND YEAR OF COLLEGE AT STATE AND WAS LIVING AT HOME TO SAVE MONEY. I'D ALWAYS RATHER SPEND TWENTY DOLLARS ON A CONCERT THAN RENT.

JOAN! *JOAN!* DO YOU *HEAR* ME?!

MY PARENTS WERE COOL. THEY USUALLY TREATED ME LIKE AN ADULT.

WHAT?

BUT WHENEVER YOU SAY "USUALLY," IT MEANS THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS!

YOUR FATHER HAS BROUGHT OVER THAT *BOY* HE TOLD YOU ABOUT YESTERDAY. THE SON OF HIS SOMETHING-OR-OTHER-- HIS *LODGE* FRIEND OR SOMEONE.

YOU *SAID* YOU'D TAKE HIM AROUND, REMEMBER? THAT'S *WHAT.*

MOM, *NO!*

WASN'T THAT *NEXT* WEEK? I CAN'T TONIGHT, SERIOUSLY. I GOT A DATE WITH *BRIAN.* WE'RE GOING TO THE FLAMINGO, THE *GOATS* ARE PLAYING.

JUST...WILL YOU TELL HIM TO COME BACK *LATER?*

THIS YOUNG MAN IS *NEW* IN TOWN AND *ALONE!*

YOUR FATHER MADE A PROMISE AND *YOU* MADE A PROMISE. AND IN THIS HOUSE, YOUNG LADY, WE *KEEP* OUR PROMISES!

AND BESIDES, HE'S A GOOD-LOOKING, *CLEAN-CUT* TYPE, UNLIKE...WELL, MAYBE THIS IS THE START OF SOMETHING *SPECIAL,* YOU NEVER KNOW!

AND THAT'S HOW I MET **DON**, THE GOOD-LOOKING, CLEAN-CUT SON OF MY DAD'S SOMETHING-OR-OTHER WHO HAD JUST TRANSFERRED TO STATE TO PLAY ON THE BASKETBALL SQUAD.

OH, ***HELLO!*** YOU MUST BE ***JOAN!***

IT'S REALLY ***SUPER*** TO MEET YOU!

I BET IT'S JUST ***PEACHY KEEN.***

YOU GOT A ***CAR?***

I TOLD HIM TO DRIVE INTO THE CITY. I FIGURED WE COULD GET A BITE TO EAT AND THEN MEET UP WITH BRIAN AT THE CLUB.

SO ARE YOU ***THE ONE?*** BECAUSE I DON'T THINK IT'S THE OTHER GUY. HE'S WAY TOO ***EASY.***

DON, DARLING, HAVE I WAITED MY ***WHOLE*** LIFE FOR ***YOU?***

ALONG THE WAY, I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE HOW NICE HE LOOKED. UNDER THAT WHOLE STIFF ACT, HE SEEMED KIND AND WARM.

I, *UH*, I DON'T THINK I ***UNDERSTAND.***

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Impala

I HAD BEEN THROUGH THE RODEO ENOUGH TIMES BY NOW TO KNOW WHAT THAT MEANT.

OH ***DON,*** MY DEAR, ***DON...***

AM I GOING TO ***LOVE*** YOU?

WE ATE AT JACK'S. DON TOLD ME ALL ABOUT HIS SMALL TOWN, ABOUT BEING RECRUITED TO COME TO THE CITY TO PLAY FOR STATE.

IT'S REALLY ***NOT*** SOMETHING I EXPECTED TO HAPPEN ***EVER.*** I WAS ALWAYS PRETTY GOOD AT BASKETBALL. BUT IT WAS JUST A ***GAME*** I PLAYED WITH MY BROTHERS AND...

YOU DON'T SAY?

BRIAN WAS LATE AS USUAL, SO WE WAITED OUTSIDE FOR HIM TO SHOW.

YOU WANT ONE?

The Flamingo

OH, NO, I HAVE THE ***GAMES,*** I DON'T EVER. NEVER GOT INTO IT. BUT ***YOU*** GO AHEAD THOUGH.

THANKS.

WHERE, *UH,* WHERE DID ***YOU*** PICK UP THE HABIT?

FRANCE.

REALLY? WOW. THAT'S ***SOPHISTICATED.***

I'VE NEVER BEEN ***ANYWHERE*** OUTSIDE OF--

BRIAN!

HEY, ***BABE,*** DON'T TELL ME YOU STARTED THE PARTY WITHOUT THE ***BRI-MAN!***

NEVER!

OH, THIS MUST BE ***BRIAN.*** OR BRI-MAN. GROOVY.

The Flamingo

THE MUSIC WAS LOUD AND CHOICE. IT WAS AN ALL AROUND FAB NIGHT.

JUST DANCING AND DRINKING AND HANGING OUT AND LETTING GO.

I TOOK A SPIN WITH A DOZEN GUYS, LETTING THE BEAT ALL THE WAY IN, SHOVING ALL THAT OTHER WORRY OUT UNTIL IT WAS JUST ME AND WHOEVER AND THE TICK-TOCK OF OUR HIPS.

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, I'D LOOK OVER AND SEE DON SITTING AT THE TABLE. I'D WAVE FOR HIM TO COME OUT, BUT HE'D SHAKE HIS HEAD.

HE DIDN'T COMPLAIN OR ANYTHING. HE WAITED AND HE SMILED AND HE LOOKED CUTE. HE JUST DIDN'T WANT TO JIVE, I GUESS.

TO EACH THEIR OWN.

SOME TIME AFTER THREE IN THE MORNING, WE POURED OURSELVES BACK ONTO THE STREET.

YOU WANT TO SACK UP AT MY PLACE? YOU CAN USE FREDDIE'S BEAN CHAIR. IT'S A ***LITTLE*** STICKY, BUT IT GETS THE JOB DONE.

WE COULD HAVE ***BREAKFAST.*** I COOK ***EGGS,*** YOU KNOW.

?!

THAT'S SWEET, ***SWEETIE,*** BUT DON'S GOT A CAR AND SOBRIETY, AND ***THAT'S*** ENOUGH FOR ANY GIRL AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT.

WHY DON'T WE JUST SAY ***SWEET DREAMS*** AND LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT ONE?

SWEET DREAMS, ***JOAN PETERSON.*** AND GOOD NIGHT, DON.

MMM.

YES, *UH,* GOOD NIGHT, ***BRI-MAN.***

IT WAS ABOUT A FIFTEEN-MINUTE WALK TO THE CAR. A SMALL WIND WAS BLOWING. I LIKED HOW IT FELT ON MY FACE. LIKE A CARESS.

I HAD A ***FINE*** TIME. I'VE NEVER BEEN TO A CLUB LIKE THAT. THEY DON'T HAVE ***THOSE*** IN TUKKEN FALLS, THAT'S FOR SURE.

AND YOUR ***FRIEND*** SEEMED REALLY NICE. I'M ***GLAD*** I GOT TO MEET HIM.

BRIAN'S ***OKAY.*** BUT IT'LL COME SOON NOW.

I'LL TURN A CORNER AND ***THERE*** HE'LL BE. WITH SOME ***OTHER*** GIRL.

AND I'LL HAVE A WHOLE BIG ***REALIZATION*** OF WHAT LIFE IS AND WHAT I ***TRULY*** WANT IN IT AND ALL OF ***THAT*** SHIT.

THEN. ***THEN.*** I'LL SUDDENLY NEED SOMETHING...

...STEADY.

OH?

WE ARRIVED JUST AS THE NIGHT GAVE UP AND STARTED TO LET THE LIGHT IN.

HOME *MARVELOUS* HOME!

ISN'T IT *PRETTY,* DON? PRETTY AND *SAFE.*

YEAH, IT *IS,* JOAN. IT'S A *HECK* OF A HOUSE YOUR PARENTS HAVE THERE. *I'D* SURE LIKE A PLACE LIKE THAT ONE DAY.

WHEN I WAS TWELVE, I LEARNED TO RIDE MY BIKE RIGHT HERE. DADDY RAN WITH ME AND LET ME GO, AND I WENT, AND I REMEMBERED IT.

PRETTY AND SAFE.

FOREVER AND EVER.

SAFE AND PRETTY.

OR I THOUGHT I REMEMBERED IT.

LET ME-- I'M SORRY, I SHOULD'VE OPENED YOUR *DOOR.* UH, LET ME AT *LEAST* WALK YOU UP.

IF YOU DON'T *MIND.*

I REMEMBERED SO MANY THINGS.

YOU'RE SAFE.

YOU'RE PRETTY. DON.

AND I'M *BORED* OF THIS ONE. THIS HOUSE. THIS DRIVEWAY. THIS BRIAN. THIS DON. THIS...I'M SICK *OF* IT, DON, IT MAKES ME WANT TO *VOMIT.*

GEORGE AND KIT AND CHAD AND ROGER AND DANE AND--

WELL, I'M SURE THAT... DO YOU WANT ME TO...I DON'T...

DON...

I GOT LOST SOMETIMES.

DON. *PRETTY* DON, *SAFE* DON. PUT YOUR ARMS AROUND ME, *DON.*

HOLD ME *CLOSE.*

OH. OKAY.

DON, I'M SURE WE COULD...WE COULD GO AROUND THE WHOLE *WORLD* TOGETHER, BUT YOU AND I-- WE DON'T NEED *THAT,* NO WAY.

LET'S JUST SKIP TO THE *END* AND SEE WHERE *THAT* TAKES ME.

I DON'T--

SHHHH.

JUST SAY WHAT I TELL YOU, THE *EXACT* WORDS, AND EVERYTHING WILL BE *PRETTY.*

AND *SAFE.*

*"I **LOVE** YOU, JOAN PETERSON."*

I...

*"I **LOVE** YOU, JOAN PETERSON. WILL YOU **MARRY** ME?"*

I... I...WELL... I...

I...

I LOVE YOU, J-JOAN *PETERSON.* WILL YOU...WILL YOU *MARRY* ME?

YES.

YES, DON, MY *LOVE.*

A *THOUSAND* TIMES YES.

HE TOOK ME IN HIS ARMS AND WE MADE PROMISES WE HAD TO KEEP THAT WE'D NEVER KEEP, AND THAT WAS THAT. SOON I'D BE ON MY WAY TO ANOTHER THRILLING ADVENTURE, ANOTHER STUPENDOUS LIFE, ANOTHER KOOKY ROMANCE. I FELT THE TINGLES IN MY TOES AND I WAS READY TO GO, FOR I KNEW I WAS...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

TOM KING
WRITER

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JOAN! JOAN! BE MINE!

IF ONLY YOU KNEW, DON! I DON'T BELONG TO ANYONE! I ONLY BELONG TO EVERYONE! EVERYONE EXCEPT ME!

AND THEN...

WAIT...

JOAN! YOU'VE MADE ME THE HAPPIEST MAN ALIVE! I'M SHAKING! THERE'S JUST JOY EVERYWHERE!

THERE I STILL WAS, IN FRONT OF MY PARENTS' HOUSE.

IT'S ALL SO FAST, BUT I KNEW FROM THE MINUTE I LAID EYES ON YOU, OR EVEN THE WAY DAD TALKED ABOUT YOU, HE EVEN SHOWED ME A PICTURE OF YOU!

OH JOAN, YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL! I'VE NEVER SEEN A GIRL LIKE YOU IN REAL LIFE!

WAIT, WAIT...

WITH DON.

SAY IT AGAIN, THE WHOLE THING, ASK ME TO MARRY YOU AND SAY YOU LOVE ME AND ALL OF IT AND KISS ME, THE WHOLE THING.

WHAT, HON?

I MEAN, OF COURSE! I'D DO IT A MILLION TIMES!

I LOVE YOU, JOAN PETERSON!

WILL YOU MARRY ME?!

YEAH, SURE, AND YES AND I LOVE YOU AND KISS ME.

MY PLEASURE.

ISN'T THIS TERRIFIC?!

FUCK.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I WENT TO BED TO SLEEP OFF SO MANY THINGS. MAYBE WHEN I WOKE UP IT WOULD BE GONE.

OR AT LEAST IT WOULD BE LATE.

OH MY GOODNESS, ***JOAN PETERSON!*** I JUST HEARD THE ***BIG*** NEWS!

AND I AM ***DELIGHTED!***

UNFORTUNATELY...

I SPOKE TO ***DON'S*** PARENTS! THEY'RE OVER THE MOON! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S HAPPENING SO ***FAST,*** AND NORMALLY I'D OBJECT, BUT THEY SEEMED SO ***NICE!***

AND HE'S ***SUCH*** A NICE BOY! YOUR FATHER AND I KNEW EACH OTHER FOR ***A WEEK*** BEFORE WE GOT ENGAGED, BUT THAT ***WAS*** DURING THE WAR...

OH, WHO ***CARES?!*** LOVE WORKS DIFFERENTLY EVERY TIME!

Zzzz

Zzz

I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT WHERE I SHOULD'VE BEEN. MAYBE A THOUSAND YEARS IN THE PAST, SURROUNDED BY KNIGHTS AND KINGS WARRING FOR MY HANDKERCHIEF.

WHAT ***TIME*** IS IT?

OR A THOUSAND YEARS IN THE FUTURE, WITH A HANDSOME MAN IN A JET PACK TELLING ME HOW MY SMILE REMINDS HIM OF A SUNSET ON VENUS.

OH, ***SWEETIE PIE,*** I THINK YOU KNOW THAT!

DON'T YOU?!

SOMEWHERE FAR FROM HERE.

IT'S TIME TO START PLANNING ***YOUR WEDDING!***

WEEKS PASSED.

I MET DON'S FAMILY.

THEY **WERE** NICE.

MOM TOOK ME SHOPPING FOR OUR CHINA.

WE DECIDED TO GET A MORE CLASSIC PATTERN, AS THEY'RE TIMELESS, REALLY.

DON'S SISTERS, ANNIE AND LOIS, WENT LOOKING FOR A WEDDING DRESS WITH ME.

I TRIED ON AT LEAST A DOZEN BEFORE WE FINALLY FOUND SOMETHING JUST PERFECT.

ABSOLUTELY PERFECT.

WE PICKED OUT A CAKE.

IT HAD MANY LAYERS AND TIERS.

AND STRAWBERRY AND RASPBERRY FILLING.

DON'S FAMILY WANTED TO HOLD THE RECEPTION IN THEIR BACKYARD.

THEIR HOUSE WAS NEW AND LARGE AND COULD ACCOMMODATE EVERYONE.

IT WOULD BE EASIER THAN GETTING A VENUE AT THIS LATE DATE. IT SOLVED A LOT OF PROBLEMS, IF YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

SOMETIMES I GOT AWAY.

WHAT? SO YOU'RE, LIKE, WHAT? LIKE, *MARRYING* THIS GUY?

DON! DON THE MARRYING MAN!

BUT NOT FAR ENOUGH.

I GUESS.

THIS ***CAN'T*** BE REAL.

WHO SAID IT WAS ***REAL?***

I'M JUST ***MARRYING*** HIM.

THE LEAVES, THE LEAVES, THEY TURN BROWN IN THE FALL...

IF YOU'RE ALL INTO ***MARRYING*** PEOPLE NOW, JOAN... I DON'T KNOW, WHY DON'T YOU MARRY ***ME?***

YOU'RE ***HIP.*** SO AM I. WHY THE HECK ***NOT?***

AND THE BIRDS, THE BIRDS, THEY ALL HEAR THE CALL...

SIGH

WHY NOT? IT DOESN'T WORK LIKE THAT. YOU'RE THE ***START,*** HE'S THE ***END,*** TRUST ME, I'VE BEEN ***THROUGH*** THIS. I CAN'T LOVE ***YOU,*** BRIAN.

AND IF I ***DON'T*** LOVE YOU, I DON'T ***GO.***

WE TRAVEL TODAY ON THE MIDNIGHT RIDE, WE SEE THE SHIP IN THE COMING TIDE...

...AND DOWN WE GO, AND DOWN WE GO, AND DOWN WE GO, AND DOWN WE GO, AND DOWN WE GO

AS THE WEDDING NEARED, DON INVITED ME TO GO ON A WALK TO SIMON'S PEAK, THE MOUNTAIN THAT OVERLOOKED OUR TOWN.

YOU'VE SEEMED A LITTLE, *UH,* ***DISTANT*** LATELY, JOAN. EVEN ***MOM*** SEES IT. SHE'S ASKING ME ABOUT IT. I TOLD HER ***I*** DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING.

BUT I THINK I ACTUALLY ***DO*** KNOW WHAT'S WRONG. IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS.

DON, DON'T--

IT'S ***MY*** FAULT. I DIDN'T DO IT RIGHT, I KNOW I DIDN'T, BUT I ***WANT*** TO, JOAN!

I WANT ***EVERYTHING*** TO BE AS ***MAGICAL*** AS IT COULD HAVE BEEN.

DON, IT'S ***FINE.*** PLEASE DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING. IT'S GOT ***NOTHING*** TO DO WITH YOU.

JOAN PETERSON. ***MY*** JOAN PETERSON.

THE MOST ***BEAUTIFUL*** GIRL IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD.

I ***HAVE*** TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.

OH, JESUS CHRIST.

WILL YOU DO ME THE ***HONOR*** OF MARRYING ME?

I MEAN. YES.

YES, OF COURSE.

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL--

JOAN! MY JOAN!

AND AGAIN HIS LIPS TOUCHED MINE, AND AGAIN I FELT HIS LOVE, AND AGAIN IT WAS KIND AND WARM.

AND WHEN IT WAS DONE...

ISN'T THAT ***BETTER?*** NOW WE HAVE SOMETHING ***NIFTY*** TO TELL THE KIDS!

THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE ALL THAT ***OTHER*** STUFF WITH... WELL, ***YOU*** KNOW. THIS IS ***SO*** MUCH BETTER!

I WAS STILL ON THAT DAMN MOUNTAIN LOOKING OVER THAT DAMN TOWN.

HUH. IT DOESN'T ***QUITE*** FIT, I'M SORRY. BUT WE CAN TAKE IT IN! IT'S ***EASY!***

THE JEWELER SAID ADJUSTMENTS ARE ***FREE,*** AND THEY'LL CLEAN IT FOR FREE TOO!

AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, THE HAPPY DAY ARRIVED.

SAVE THE DATE

Don and Joan

MY GOSH, LOOK AT YOU, MY *BABY,* YOU LOOK ABSOLUTELY *ANGELIC,* JOANIE!

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING BORROWED AND BLUE AND NEW OR *WHATEVER* THAT OLD WIVES' TALE DEMANDS ON THESE OCCASIONS?

DADDY, I'VE DONE *SO* MUCH.

BUT...BUT I NEVER ACTUALLY GOT *MARRIED* BEFORE.

HAHAHA

WELL, DEAR, LIFE IS *LONG,* THE WORLD IS *WIDE...*

...AND THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR *EVERYTHING.*

AND HERE IT WAS, THE MOMENT EVERY LITTLE GIRL DREAMS OF, OR SO I'D ALWAYS BEEN TOLD: STANDING IN FRONT OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY IN A BEAUTIFUL DRESS WITH A HANDSOME MAN. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN OVERFLOWING WITH JUBILATION. BUT I JUST COULDN'T ESCAPE THE THOUGHT THAT I WAS...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

...I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU *HUSBAND* AND *WIFE!*

JOAN! WE *DID* IT!

THIS IS *PERFECT.* I LOVE DON SO MUCH. *DON'T I?!*

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
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COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

MAYBE THIS IS WHAT WAS NEEDED.

AND NOW YOU MAY KISS THE BRIDE!

TO BE HERE, TO HEAR THE PRIEST AND LET EVERYONE SEE AND...

JOAN, MY DEAR JOAN.

TO FEEL HIM.

I LOVE YOU.

MAYBE IT'S ENOUGH. MAYBE I'LL FADE NOW AND MAYBE GO SOMEWHERE NEW AND DIFFERENT AND MAGICAL AND MAYBE--

I...

AND MAYBE NOT.

I LOVE YOU TOO.

AT THE RECEPTION, EVERYONE WAS SO HAPPY AND CHATTY, NO ONE NOTICED WHEN I SWIPED DON'S KEYS AND DROVE OFF IN HIS CAR.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE I WAS GOING. LIKE ALWAYS.

WHICH IS TO SAY, I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR.

MAYBE HE'D BE IN A TRUCK. RIGHT BEHIND ME.

KNOWING HIM THOUGH, MORE LIKELY IT'D BE A HORSE.

HE LIKED TO PLAY HIS ROLE A LOT MORE THAN I DID.

I DROVE FOR HOURS.

THE SUN WAS STARTING TO SET. THEY'D NOTICE I WAS GONE. IF I HEADED BACK NOW, I COULD AT LEAST MAKE UP SOME EXCUSE.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I PULLED TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD AND GOT OUT.

MAYBE SOME AIR WOULD HELP.

I THOUGHT, I SHOULD JUST GO BACK TO THE PARTY. TO DON. SAFE AND PRETTY DON.

I LOVED HIM. I DID. DIDN'T I?

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH ME?

BUT IT WAS...TOO LATE FOR LOVE. OR WHATEVER.

AIN'T A *THING* WRONG WITH YOU, JOAN.

ANYWAY. THE COWBOY WAS HERE.

HELL, HOW MANY YEARS *HAS* IT BEEN WE BEEN AT THIS?

HOWEVER MANY, I'M GROWING TO ADMIRE YOUR *PLUCK.*

IT WAS TIME TO MOVE ON.

GREAT. THANKS.

BUT JUST *DO* IT, ALL RIGHT? I DON'T FEEL LIKE *TALKING.*

IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY.

GOODBYE, MOM, GOODBYE, DAD.

DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU *MEAN.*

JUST CAME TO WISH YOU *ALL* THE LUCK IN THE WORLD.

YOU MAKE A *BEAUTIFUL* BRIDE, JOAN.

GOODBYE, DON.

SHUT UP WITH THAT *SHIT!* I'M RUNNING AWAY! I'M *GOING!*

I DON'T WANT IT! FUCK IT! FUCK *ALL* OF THEM!

JUST FUCKING *SHOOT* ME AND LET ME START OVER!

HE LOOKED ME OVER, UP AND DOWN.

HE SMILED SLYLY.

THEN HE TIPPED HIS HAT.

AND WALKED AWAY.

YUP.

HELL OF A BEAUTIFUL BRIDE.

I DIDN'T WAIT TO SEE WHERE HE WAS HEADED.

I DIDN'T CARE ANYMORE.

I TURNED THE CAR AROUND.

THERE WAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

IT'S *MY* FAULT. I JUST WANTED TO VISIT *GRANDMA* AT HER GRAVE, IT WAS SILLY, BUT I ALWAYS PROMISED HER I'D SHOW HER MY DRESS.

I SNUCK OFF, I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL YOU, IT WAS SO *STUPID,* AND THEN I GOT ALL *TURNED* AROUND. THAT EXIT ON THE 101 ALWAYS CONFUSES ME.

I'M SO SORRY, I CAN'T BELIEVE I MISSED MY *OWN* PARTY.

OH, THAT'S SO *SWEET,* DEAR, DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT A *THING.*

THIS DAY IS ABOUT *YOU,* NOT ABOUT THE PARTY OR ANY OF THOSE PEOPLE. WE JUST WANT *YOU* TO BE HAPPY. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, FRED?

ABSOLUTELY. BUT IT IS GETTING FAIRLY LATE. YOU SHOULD GET TO THE *HOTEL,* YOU DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOUR RESERVATION.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I DIDN'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT THAT! WE BETTER HURRY!

DON, SHALL WE?

YOUR *CHARIOT* AWAITS!

MOM. DAD. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH FOR THIS DAY.

IT WAS ALL I *EVER* DREAMED IT WOULD BE.

WE HAD A SUITE IN A HOTEL BY THE AIRPORT.

SKYLINE HOTEL

IN THE MORNING, WE WERE LEAVING FOR NIAGARA.

DON HAD ARRANGED IT ALL. WE WERE GOING TO SLEEP IN A CUTE YELLOW BUNGALOW RIGHT AT THE EDGE OF THE FALLS.

JOAN?! *JOAN,* DEAR!

IS EVERYTHING *ALL RIGHT?!*

EVERY MORNING, RAIN OR SHINE, WE WERE GOING TO WAKE TO THE SOUND OF WATER FALLING.

YES, *DON!*

I MEAN--

EVERYTHING'S *SPLENDID,* MY LOVE!

I'M JUST, *UHM...*

IT WAS ALL SO ROMANTIC.

I'M COMING NOW!

IT WAS A REAL *DANDY* CEREMONY. I THINK EVERYONE HAD A *SWELL* TIME.

YEAH.

FOR SURE.

GOSH, YOU'RE SO *GOOD-LOOKING,* JOAN.

LIKE A *FLOWER.*

DON...

...WHO AM I?

JOAN, DON'T BE FUNNY.

YOU'RE MY *WIFE.* YOU'LL *ALWAYS* BE MY WIFE.

FOREVER AND EVER.

TO BE CONTINUED.

OKAY, *EVERYBODY!* AROUND AND *AROUND* AND AROUND WE *GO!* WHERE WE'LL STOP, *NOBODY* KNOWS!

ISN'T THIS *FUN,* JOANIE?! ISN'T IT JUST *PERFECT?!*

YES, DON.

IT'S *LOVELY.*

HOLLINGSWORTH

THESE WERE THE JOYFUL YEARS. TIMMY WAS SUCH A WONDERFUL, CUTE, AND EAGER INFANT. DAVID WAS STARTING TO BECOME THIS SWEET BOY I ALWAYS KNEW HE'D BE. DON HAD GOTTEN HIS BIG PROMOTION AT HIS FATHER'S FIRM. I HAD EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO TAKE CARE OF MY CHARMING FAMILY.

AND YET. SOMEWHERE IN THE BACK OF MY MIND, IN A PLACE I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE OR EVEN ACKNOWLEDGE, I COULDN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT I WAS STILL...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

TOM KING
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LETTERER

ALL RIGHT, *EVERYONE,* BE YOUR BEST!

THIS SHOULD BE THE *HAPPIEST* DAY OF MY LIFE! WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH *ME?!* WHY DO I HOLD ON TO THIS *TERRIBLE SECRET?!*

ALTHOUGH I THOUGHT WE HAD PLENTY OF PICTURES OF EVERYONE FROM OUR OWN CAMERA, DON INSISTED THAT WE SPEND THE MONEY AND HIRE A PROFESSIONAL.

IN THE END HE WAS RIGHT. THE KIDS WON'T BE YOUNG FOREVER. WE NEED TO SAVOR THESE MOMENTS FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN.

AND THERE YOU ARE. LOOKING *VERY GOOD,* MR. AND MRS. GRAHAM! NOW LET'S GET EVERYONE TOGETHER WITH A *SMILE!*

SAY *CHEESE!*

CLICK

CHEESE!

THANK YOU *SO* MUCH FOR COMING, ROBERT. WE'VE *REALLY* BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS.

I CAN'T *WAIT* TO SEE HOW THEY TURN OUT. IT'LL BE GREAT.

YOU REALLY HAVE A *LOVELY* FAMILY, MR. GRAHAM, YOU SHOULD BE *PROUD.*

SEE, THAT WASN'T SO HARD, WAS IT, *JOANIE?*

DIDN'T TAKE MORE THAN AN HOUR. ALL THE CHORES WILL STILL GET DONE. IT'S GOING TO BE *FINE,* LIKE I TOLD YOU IT WOULD BE.

OH *DON,* DO YOU *EVER* GET TIRED OF BEING RIGHT?

HAHAHA.

YOU LOOK *BEAUTIFUL,* DARLING.

AS *ALWAYS.*

THANK YOU, HONEY. THAT'S *VERY* SWEET.

LATER THAT NIGHT, I PUT TIMMY DOWN WHILE DON TUCKED IN DAVID.

SHHHHHH.

YOU SLEEP *TIGHT,* MOMMY *LOVES* YOU.

Modern Moth

DON AND I GOT COMFORTABLE ON THE DAVENPORT AND WATCHED A FEW SHOWS ON TV.

THEN WE GOT READY FOR BED.

IF I STAY UP AFTER MIDNIGHT, I'LL BE A WRECK THE NEXT DAY. AND DON NEVER STAYS UP LATE. IT'S JUST HOW HE IS, I GUESS.

DON COULD JUST POP RIGHT OFF INTO SLEEP.

BUT I ALWAYS HAD TO READ A BOOK FIRST, TO CALM THE THOUGHTS OF THE DAY.

NIGHT, DEAR.

GOOD NIGHT, DON.

I READ MY NOVEL. IT WAS ABOUT A YOUNG LADY BACK IN COWBOY TIMES.

SHE WAS IN LOVE WITH ONE BOY, BUT TEMPTED BY ANOTHER.

DON LEFT FOR WORK EVERY DAY AT 8:30. HIS OFFICE WAS IN THE CITY WHERE MOST OF HIS CLIENTS WERE. USUALLY HE TOOK THE TRAIN. SOMETIMES HE'D DRIVE IN.

DON LIKED HIS JOB ENOUGH, I GUESS. THOUGH HE HAD HIS COMPLAINTS. HIS BOSS WAS ALWAYS GIVING HIM INSTRUCTIONS THAT WERE IMPOSSIBLE.

I TOLD HIM TO TELL HIS FATHER, THE PRESIDENT OF THE FIRM, ABOUT ALL THE PROBLEMS, BUT DON SAID IT WOULDN'T WORK.

HE SAID I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

WHILE DON WAS AWAY, I DID THE USUAL HOUSEWIFE DUTIES. COOKING AND CLEANING AND TRYING TO KEEP MY TWO ADORABLE TYRANTS OUT OF TOO MUCH TROUBLE.

THEY WEREN'T REALLY ALL THAT BAD. I SHOULDN'T SAY THAT. THEY WERE BOYS WITH TOO MUCH ENERGY AT TIMES, WHICH IS WHAT YOU'D EXPECT.

IT WAS EXHAUSTING RUNNING AFTER THEM, BUT WHENEVER I STOPPED RUNNING I'D MISS THE CHASE. I'M NOT SAYING IT MADE SENSE, JUST THE WAY IT WAS.

ON THE WEEKENDS WE DID CHORES AND RAN ERRANDS, MADE SURE THE HOUSE LOOKED HANDSOME BOTH INSIDE AND OUT.

I ENJOYED THE WEEKENDS BEST BECAUSE DON WAS HOME AND THE WHOLE FAMILY COULD BE TOGETHER ALL DAY.

SOMETIMES I'D LOOK UP DURING DINNER AND SEE MY THREE MEN, AND I'D ASK MYSELF: WHAT WONDERFUL THING HAD I DONE TO END UP HERE?

YOU KNOW, I *REALLY* ADMIRE YOU AND DON.

DON IS A TERRIFIC FATHER. I'M A LUCKY WOMAN.

NO, I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT *JUST* DON, I MEAN THE *TWO* OF YOU, HOW YOU ARE TOGETHER. I *NEVER* SEE YOU FIGHT OR EVEN SQUABBLE.

FRANK AND I ARE *ALWAYS* AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS. IT'S FOREVER SOMETHING ABOUT *MONEY* OR THE HOUSE OR THE *KIDS.*

gah gah

I DON'T KNOW.

DON AND I FIGHT *SOMETIMES.*

HAHA, I'M SURE.

WHAT *DOES* THE PERFECT COUPLE FIGHT ABOUT? ARE WE *TOO* GOOD LOOKING?

HAHAHA.

DON'T BE *FACETIOUS.*

WE'RE AS *NORMAL* AS ANYONE ELSE.

DURING BASKETBALL SEASON, WE'D SKIP THE TV, AND DON WOULD LISTEN TO THE GAMES ON THE RADIO. I'D READ OR FINISH UP AROUND THE HOUSE.

TURNER CHARGING DOWN, PASSES TO **NELSON** ON THE OUTSIDE, **NELSON** PULLS UP FROM TWENTY FEET, OFF THE LEFT SIDE OF THE RIM.

REBOUND ST. LOUIS.

DO YOU KNOW BETH SAID THAT ***WE'RE*** THE PERFECT COUPLE? THAT'S WHAT SHE THINKS. ISN'T THAT SORT OF ***TOUCHING?***

CLICK

WHAT'S THAT, ***HONEY?*** I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T ***HEAR*** YOU.

OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TURN OFF YOUR ***GAME,*** DON.

I WAS JUST SAYING SOMETHING ***BETH*** SAID AT THE PARK TODAY, IT WASN'T ANYTHING. TURN IT BACK ON. I'VE GOT ***DISHES.***

NO. ***FORGET*** THE GAME.

I DON'T WANT TO LISTEN TO THAT BORING ***CRUD*** ANYMORE.

I JUST WANT ***YOU.***

OH, DON... YOU'RE SUCH A ***CORNBALL!***

THE NEXT DAY, I DROPPED THE BOYS OFF WITH MY MOTHER AND WENT TO THE STORES TO DO MY WEEKLY SHOPPING.

MMM-

I USED TO TAKE DAVID WITH ME, BUT RECENTLY HE STARTED GETTING TOO ANTSY TO JUST SIT IN THE CART.

I DID PRETTY WELL. I HAD CLIPPED COUPONS BEFORE-HAND AND FOUND MOST OF WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR.

DON WOULD SAY COUPONS ARE DUMB AND WE DON'T NEED THEM, BUT EVERY PENNY COUNTS, EVEN IF YOUR HUSBAND IS A BIG DOWNTOWN LAWYER.

I DROVE HOME TO PUT EVERYTHING AWAY BEFORE I PICKED UP THE BOYS.

IT WAS SOMEWHAT CROWDED ON McKINLEY, SO I TOOK ORANGE AVENUE, WHICH HAS SUCH ELEGANT TREES LINING THE ROAD.

IT WOULD TAKE A COUPLE OF TRIPS TO GET ALL THE FOOD IN THE HOUSE. IT TAKES A TON TO FEED A HAPPY FAMILY OF FOUR.

DON WANTED TO HIRE A GIRL TO HELP WITH ALL THIS RIGAMAROLE. I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS NECESSARY. I COULD DO IT ALL.

GOD PUT ME ON THIS EARTH FOR A REASON.

GOD

REASON

EARTH

ME

THIS

AA

REASON

FOR

ME

A

GOD

FOR

REASON

THIS

GOD

FOR

EARTH

A

REASON

FOR

GOD

A

GRASSHH

GOD

FOR

ME

TIME PASSED. I FOUND MYSELF SITTING ON THE FLOOR OF MY KITCHEN, SMOKING MY CIGARETTE. I REMEMBERED GEORGE, HOW WE'D WORK LATE TOGETHER AND STEAL LOOKS AT ONE ANOTHER, BOTH KNOWING IT COULD NEVER BE. I LOVED GEORGE, DIDN'T I? OR WAS IT ALWAYS THIS WAY? WAS I FOREVER...

TO

ALL THE TIME, ***EVERY*** DAY I ***FAKE*** IT. BECAUSE IT'S AS CLOSE TO HAPPINESS AS I CAN GET.

BUT A WOMAN CAN GET TIRED OF ***FAKING IT!***

Ring Ring

FOR LOVE

Ring Ring

Ring Ring

Ring Ring

Ring Ring

I'M *SORRY,* MOMMA, IT'S MY FAULT. TELL THEM I'M COMING NOW.

AND IF THEY *WHINE* TOO MUCH TO GRANDMA AND GRANDPA, THEY'RE NOT GETTING *ANY* DESSERT!

YES. OKAY. I'LL SEE YOU *SOON.*

CLICK

DON HAD TO WORK LATE THAT NIGHT, THAT BOSS OF HIS WAS MAKING A FUSS AGAIN.

SO I PUT THE KIDS TO SLEEP MYSELF.

I READ THEM A FEW STORIES, THE ONES THEY LIKED BEST. WITH PRINCES AND KNIGHTS AND CASTLES AND WARS.

AND THEN I HUMMED THEM A SONG AS THEY LAID DOWN. I RUBBED DAVID'S BACK. I KISSED TIMMY'S HEAD.

JOAN, DARLING!

AFTER THEY WERE DOWN, I WENT IN TO CHECK ON THEM. JUST WATCHED THEM BREATHING IN AND OUT, FALLING INTO DREAMS.

I'M HOME...

THEY'RE SUCH LITTLE ANGELS.

DON, IS THAT *YOU?!*

I'M IN THE *DINING* ROOM! *DINNER'S* READY!

WHAT THE *HELL* HAPPENED?!

I'M SORRY, EXCUSE MY *LANGUAGE,* BUT...

ARE YOU *ALL RIGHT?!* ARE THE *KIDS*--DID YOU CALL THE *POLICE?!*

I MADE *MEATLOAF* WITH SOME MASH AND GRAVY.

AND *GREEN BEANS.* I KNOW YOU DON'T LOVE THEM, BUT WITH SOME BUTTER AND SALT THEY'RE NOT BAD, AND THEY'RE GOOD FOR YOUR *HEALTH.*

WE HAVE TO WATCH YOUR *HEALTH.* YOU WON'T LIVE *FOREVER.*

JOAN. WHAT'S GOING ON?

ARE YOU *OKAY?*

I USED *ALL* OF THE COUPONS TODAY AND GOT DOUBLE VALUE ON THE DISH SOAP *AND* THE BANANAS.

THE WOMAN AT THE COUNTER ACTUALLY TOLD ME *CONGRATULATIONS* WHEN SHE RANG IT UP.

LIKE I'D WON AN *AWARD.*

JOAN...

SIT DOWN AND EAT YOUR FUCKING *MEATLOAF!*

THAT NIGHT I READ A NOVEL ABOUT A MAID IN A GREAT BRITISH HOUSE.

SHE WAS BORN ON THE SAME DAY AS THE HEIR TO THE ESTATE. BEING THE DAUGHTER OF THE NURSEMAID, SHE WAS RAISED WITH THE BOY.

WHEN THEY WERE IN THEIR TEENS, THEY GAVE EACH OTHER THEIR FIRST KISSES.

AS THEY MATURED, THEY ADOPTED THE ROLES EVERYONE ELSE HAD WRITTEN FOR THEM.

BUT THE SMALL FLAME OF LOVE THAT HAD IGNITED IN THEIR CHILDHOOD CONTINUED TO SPREAD AND GROW UNTIL IT WAS A POWERFUL INFERNO.

THEY TRIED TO HIDE IT FROM THEIR PARENTS AND FROM THE WORLD, BUT ALL WAS FOR NAUGHT, AND THEY WERE DISCOVERED!

STILL THE HEIR PLEDGED HIS HEART TO THE MAID. HE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES, HE NEEDED TO BE WITH HER.

I TURNED THE PAGES EAGERLY, ONLY SKIMMING ALL THE BEWITCHING WORDS.

I COULDN'T WAIT TO SEE HOW IT ENDED.

SO...

I *HATE* TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO.

BUT DON AND I HAD A *BIG* FIGHT.

HONESTLY?

WHAT ABOUT?

I GUESS THE HOUSE WAS *MESSY* WHEN HE GOT HOME AND HE JUST...IT WASN'T LIKE HE EXPLODED, BUT HE WAS *DEMANDING.*

*"WHY IS IT **THIS** WAY? WHAT **HAPPENED?** WHAT DID YOU **DO?** WHAT ABOUT THE **KIDS?"***

JUST HOLDING ME UP TO THIS *IMPOSSIBLE* STANDARD, AS IF *I* DON'T WORK AS HARD AS *HE* DOES.

TYPICAL.

DID *I* EVER TELL YOU ABOUT THE TIME *JOHN* CAME HOME AND--

WAIT, IS THAT...

HERE, *TAKE* HIM, I HAVE TO...

JOAN? WHAT *IS* IT?

JOAN?

PENNY!

PENNY PAGE!

IT'S *YOU!*

EXCUSE ME?

WHAT...*PENNY,* WHAT IS THIS? I NEED TO KNOW NOW. I CAN'T *DO* THIS ANYMORE. I CAN'T *PRETEND...*

HOW DO I GET *OUT?* WHAT DID I *DO?* WAS IT BRIAN? WAS *HE* THE ONE?

IS THIS *PUNISHMENT* FOR THE SCISSORS? I'M *SORRY,* OKAY, I'M SORRY, I JUST... I DON'T *UNDERSTAND!* YOU HAVE TO *HELP* ME GET OUT!

MA'AM, IS EVERYTHING *OKAY?* I...

I THINK YOU MAY HAVE CONFUSED ME FOR *SOMEONE* ELSE? I'M SORRY.

DON'T...

DON'T GIVE ME THAT *SHIT,* PENNY!

DON'T YOU EVEN *FUCKING* DARE!

JOAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

BETH, SHE'S NOT LIKE YOU! SHE'S ONE OF THEM! SHE'S LIKE ME!

SHE WORKS FOR THEM! THE COWBOY! AND MY MOTHER!

IS THIS YOUR FRIEND? SHE SEEMS...

OW. SHE'S HURTING ME.

JOAN! LET HER GO!

PEOPLE ARE LOOKING! DAVID IS LOOKING!

JOAN?

WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?

WHAT...

YOU DON'T...

SHE'S KEEPING ME HERE. I'M NOT...

THIS...

...IS NOT...

...WHERE I'M SUPPOSED TO BE.

I SAT ON THE GROUND AND I CRIED. EVERYONE IN THE PARK WAS STARING AT ME. THEY PROBABLY THOUGHT I WAS SICK OR BROKEN. BUT THEY WERE WRONG. I ONLY HAD ONE PROBLEM. I KNEW THEN AND THERE NO MATTER WHAT I DID, I'D ALWAYS BE...

TOO

LIP

OVE

JOAN, OH JOAN...

GO AWAY. I'M ***FINE.*** I'LL BE ***BETTER*** SOON.

THAT ***FOOLISH*** JOAN!

SHE THOUGHT SHE COULD ESCAPE ***LOVE!***

SHE SHOULD'VE REMEMBERED WHAT HER MOTHER ALWAYS SAYS...

LOVE IS EVERLASTING!

ON FRIDAYS I'D GO TO MY PARENTS' WHILE DON ATTENDED HIS POKER GAME. I LOOKED FORWARD TO IT ALL WEEK.

WHY? IS EVERYTHING *ALL RIGHT,* DADDY?

THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO ASK *YOU,* SWEETIE PIE.

I TALKED TO *DON.* FOR QUITE SOME TIME.

OH, *DON'T* WORRY ABOUT THAT. HE GETS *WORKED* UP THESE DAYS. HIS BOSS IS GIVING HIM TROUBLE. IT'S NOT A BIG WHOOP-DE-DO.

JOAN, HON...

I THINK MAYBE WE NEED TO HAVE A TALK.

IS THERE *ANYTHING* YOU WANT TO TELL ME?

ANYTHING AT ALL. WHATEVER IT IS, WE CAN TALK THROUGH IT. YOU AND I, WE'LL GET THROUGH IT *TOGETHER.* OKAY?

I *LOVE* YOU, JOAN, JUST LIKE DON DOES, JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER DOES, AND MAYBE IT'D HELP IF WE LAID *EVERYTHING* OUT ON THE TABLE.

JOAN...I'M REALLY *UNCOMFORTABLE* HERE. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO *PUT* ALL THIS.

BUT I TOLD DON THAT WE COULD SIT DOWN AND DISCUSS THINGS AND FIND A SOLUTION TO *ANY* PROBLEMS THAT MAY HAVE ARISEN.

I THINK THAT'S *BEST.*

DADDY, CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?

WHAT YEAR IS IT?

UHM...
WELL...IT'S...IT'S *1963,* DARLING.
YOU KNOW THAT.
NO, DADDY.
IT *CAN'T* BE.
SAVE THE DATE
Don and Joan
May 2, 1963
"I MET DON IN 1963. WE GOT MARRIED IN 1963.
"WE LIVED ON CAMPUS TOGETHER AND WENT TO COLLEGE IN 1963. TWO YEARS LATER, WE GRADUATED FROM STATE.
"CLASS OF 1963.
ONGRATULATI
Class of 1963
SAVE FOR YOUR DREAM HOME
"THREE YEARS AFTER THAT, WE BOUGHT THE HOUSE ON HUCKLEBERRY. IT WAS SUCH A NICE HOUSE, AND YOU GAVE US MONEY FOR THE DOWN PAYMENT.
P.S. PLAN 1963!
"WE MOVED IN. IN 1963.
22 APRIL 1963
"AND TWO MORE YEARS PASSED, WONDERFUL YEARS, DADDY. DON AND I WE WERE IN LOVE AND IT WAS WONDERFUL. THOSE YEARS.
"AND THEN MY DAVID WAS BORN.
"ON APRIL 22, 1963."

JOAN, NO.

YOU'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR *TEN* YEARS NOW. THAT WAS *1953,* DEAR. I KNOW, I WAS *THERE,* STANDING RIGHT NEXT TO YOU, REMEMBER?

YOU'RE *WORRYING* ME, JOAN. WHAT IS THIS TALK?

AND *TIMMY,* MY SPECIAL BOY, MY *LITTLE* GUY, BORN *THIS* YEAR.

JULY 30, 1963.

HAHAHA.

WHAT IS *THIS,* HONEY? A JOKE? AM I JUST TOO OLD TO GET IT? NOT *HIP* ENOUGH? OR SHOULD I BE *WORRIED* ABOUT ANY OF THIS?

NEXT YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME YOUR NAME ISN'T *JOAN PETERSON!*

DADDY, *PLEASE.*

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT *THAT!*

MY NAME *IS* JOAN PETERSON.

I

AM

ALWAYS

JOAN

PETERSON.

THIS NEXT STORY WAS ABOUT THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

A SOLDIER, DANE, WHO IS NEW TO THE BATTLE, FALLS FOR A SEDUCTIVE CHANTEUSE IN A SMOKY BAR NEAR THE FRONT LINES.

SHE SINGS AND IT GOES RIGHT TO HIS HEART.

THE WOMAN DOESN'T WANT TO FALL IN LOVE WITH A SOLDIER BECAUSE ALL SOLDIERS DO IS DIE, AND SO DANE GOES OFF TO WAR, AND SHE STAYS BEHIND.

BUT DANE KEEPS COMING BACK.

EVERY TIME ONE OF HIS FRIENDS DIES, HE RETURNS TO CELEBRATE THEIR LIFE. AND TO SEE HER.

EVENTUALLY SHE CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL FOR HIM. AND SHE STARTS TO SEE HIM AS NOT JUST ANOTHER SOLDIER, BUT AS A SYMBOL OF SOMETHING.

KNOCK KNOCK

JOAN?

SOMETHING FREE.

JOAN...

I'M *SO* SORRY.

THE MEN DON BROUGHT TOOK ME TO ST. ABSALOM'S, A HOSPITAL ABOUT FORTY-FIVE MINUTES AWAY FROM OUR HOME.

OH, YOU MUST BE ***JOAN PETERSON!***

WELCOME!

WE'RE SO ***GLAD*** TO HAVE YOU!

IT WAS NICE THERE.

WE KNOW OF ALL THE ***STIGMA*** ATTACHED TO PLACES LIKE THIS. BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW ***NONE*** OF THAT'S TRUE.

I WANT YOU TO THINK OF YOUR STAY HERE AS A ***VACATION.*** LIFE IS ***INCREDIBLY*** HARD AND SOMETIMES WE NEED TO ***STOP*** FOR A SECOND AND REST.

WE'RE GOING TO HELP YOU FIND A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN BE ***CALM,*** THAT'S ALL.

AND CLEAN.

AND WHAT ABOUT ***ME?***

NO.

AND YOUR ***HUSBAND?*** YOUR ***FAMILY?***

NO.

EVEN YOUR ***CHILDREN.***

ARE THEY REAL?

DO ***THEY*** EXIST?

NO.

I'VE LIVED SO MANY LIVES.

I REMEMBER THEM ALL.

I WAS A NURSE AND I WAS A SECRETARY AND I WAS A RACE CAR DRIVER AND I WAS A TENNIS PRO AND I WAS AN EDITOR AND I WAS A PUBLICIST AND I WAS A NEWS ANCHOR AND I WAS AN ACTRESS AND I WAS A PILOT AND I WAS A HOUSEKEEPER AND I WAS

I WAS

I WAS

I WAS IN LOVE.

TO BE CONTINUED.

18

I AM *JOAN PETERSON.* I AM A *MOTHER* AND A *WIFE.* I *LOVE* MY FAMILY.

I AM *JOAN PETERSON.* I AM A *MOTHER* AND A *WIFE.* I *LOVE* MY FAMILY.

I AM *JOAN PETERSON.* I AM A *MOTHER* AND A *WIFE.* I *LOVE* MY FAMILY.

LIAR, LIAR, PANTS ON FIRE...

1963

ELEF HOLLINGSWORTH 2025

I'D SPENT A DECADE GOING FROM ONE HOSPITAL TO ANOTHER, SKIPPING THROUGH DOZENS OF SMALL WHITE ROOMS WITH THEIR POORLY FITTED WHITE SHEETS AND COARSE WHITE PILLOWS.

A LOT OF DOCTORS SMOKING SUCH A WIDE VARIETY OF PIPES HAD LAIN ME DOWN ON THEIR MANY COUCHES AND TOLD ME THAT I WAS GETTING BETTER, THAT EVERY DAY I WAS LEARNING THAT, IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, NO ONE REALLY IS...

HE *SAID* HE'D BE HERE. MAYBE I SHOULD'VE WAITED *INSIDE.* BUT I DON'T *THINK* HE LIKES THESE PLACES. I'M *SURE* HE'LL COME SOON.

HE DOESN'T WANT ME TO BE *ALONE.*

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

I WAS SO WORRIED, BUT I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN. DON WAS RIGHT ON TIME. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN SO PATIENT AND CONSIDERATE.

DON PUT MY CASE AWAY AND GAVE ME THE LATEST UPDATES ON THE CHILDREN.

JUST GOT WORD YESTERDAY THAT ***DAVID*** MADE JUNIOR VARSITY! GOING TO PLAY POINT, JUST LIKE HIS OLD MAN. THOUGH HE HASN'T GOTTEN ***ALL*** MY MOVES YET!

BUT THE WAY HE'S ***IMPROVING,*** HE'LL GET THERE! THAT'S FOR ***SURE!***

HE DROVE US HOME. I DIDN'T HAVE A LICENSE ANYMORE, THEY'D YANKED THAT AWAY YEARS AGO. BUT EVEN IF I HAD, DON ALWAYS DOES THE DRIVING.

...AND ***FRANK*** LOOKS AT ME AND SAYS, "YOU DIDN'T SELL THAT GUY A ***PLAN,*** YOU SOLD HIM A ***PLANET!***"

HAHA HAHAHA HA

IT WAS A SEVEN-HOUR TRIP. WE'D TRIED PLACES CLOSER TO HOME, BUT THEY HADN'T WORKED OUT THAT WELL.

I SPENT THE TIME LISTENING TO DON'S STORIES ABOUT THE INSURANCE BUSINESS WHILE I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW.

OH, MAN, FRANK IS SAYING THAT STUFF ***ALL*** THE TIME. HE COULD BE ON TV WITH ***JACK PARR.*** I'D WATCH HIM ***EVERY*** NIGHT!

ABOUT HALFWAY THROUGH THE TRIP, I SAW A COWBOY ON A HORSE.

YOU JUST ***HAVE*** TO MEET HIM! HIM AND HIS WIFE WANT TO HAVE ***DINNER,*** I'LL PUT SOMETHING TOGETHER ONCE YOU'RE ***SETTLED*** IN.

NO ***RUSH.*** OF COURSE.

THE BOYS WERE WAITING FOR ME AT THE HOUSE. THEY HAD BOTH GROWN SO MUCH SINCE THE LAST TIME I'D SEEN THEM.

THAT ALWAYS HAPPENED. I WAS USED TO IT BY THEN.

MOMMY!

ALL RIGHT, *BOYS!* NOW, REMEMBER WHAT I SAID, *ONE* HUG EACH.

THEN WE'RE GOING TO LET YOUR *MOTHER* GET SOME *WELL-EARNED* REST.

IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY, I'M SURE SHE'S *QUITE* TIRED.

HOME MOTHER!!

WELCOME *HOME,* MOTHER.

THANK YOU, DAVID.

WELCOME HOME, *MOTHER!*

THAT'S *VERY* SWEET, TIMMY.

HE'S GOING BY *TIM,* NOW.

TOLD *ALL* HIS FRIENDS AT SCHOOL, HE'S TOO OLD FOR *"TIMMY."* *HAHA.*

HE'S GETTING TO BE A *MAN,* NEEDS A *MAN'S* NAME. THAT'S WHAT HE SAID! CAN YOU *BELIEVE* THAT?!

I THINK YOU'RE *RIGHT,* DON.

I SHOULD GET SOME *SHUT-EYE* BEFORE DINNER.

DON WALKED ME UPSTAIRS. HE ALWAYS WAS SUCH A GENTLEMAN.

HE TOLD ME MRS. MAZY NEXT DOOR WAS GOING TO BRING OVER A CASSEROLE FOR DINNER, SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MAKING ANYTHING.

AT THE DOOR, HE GAVE ME A KISS AND WENT BACK DOWN. HE WAS GOING TO TAKE THE KIDS OUT TO THE PARK TO PLAY SOME BASKETBALL.

I PUT ON MY PAJAMAS, CLOSED THE SHADES, AND GOT INTO BED.

IT WAS NICE TO BE HOME.

YOU WANT TO *TALK* ABOUT IT?

NO.

NOT NOW.

DAYS WENT BY.

THE SPELLMANS' ***CAT*** HAS BEEN COMING IN THE YARD. I SAW HER ***AGAIN*** YESTERDAY. EATING OUR GARDENIAS. THEY SHOULD GET ***CONTROL*** OF HER.

YES, HONEY.

THE BOYS WENT TO SCHOOL. DON WENT TO WORK.

I MIGHT BE A ***TAD*** LATE. THE BOSS'S BIRTHDAY IS THIS WEEKEND, AND FRANK AND I ARE GOING TO STOP OVER AT THE CLUB AND PICK HIM UP SOME ***PRIMO*** CIGARS.

THAT'S ***ALL RIGHT,*** THANKS FOR LETTING ME KNOW. HAVE A FINE DAY.

I'D GET SOME CLEANING DONE. DON SAID IT WASN'T NECESSARY. HE'D HIRED A GIRL TO COME AROUND AND DO IT ALL.

BUT THE COWBOY KEPT TRAIPSING THROUGH THE HOUSE WITH MUD ON HIS BOOTS. I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE ALL THAT MESS ON THE CARPET WHEN EVERYONE CAME HOME.

ON SATURDAYS WE'D GO TO DAVID'S BALL GAMES AND CHEER HIM ON. DON WAS RIGHT. HE'D IMPROVED SO MUCH.

WHAT ARE YOU ***DOING,*** REF?! THIS ISN'T A ***WRESTLING*** MATCH! MAKE SOME ***CALLS!***

YEAH, ***REF!*** MAKE THE ***CALLS!***

DON LOVED BASKETBALL. HE ALWAYS HAD. SINCE THAT FIRST DAY WE MET. WHEN I TOLD HIM I LOVED HIM AND WE WOULD HAVE TO GET MARRIED.

AND THEN WE DID.

WE JUST DID.

SEEMS LIKE THINGS ARE GOING PRETTY GOOD...

I THINK SO.

YOU KNOW HOW I CAN ***REALLY*** TELL THINGS ARE GOING GOOD?

USUALLY BY NOW YOU'VE ASKED ME WHAT YEAR IT IS. MORE THAN A ***FEW*** TIMES.

OH, ***WOULD*** I? I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT, DON. IT'S ***EMBARRASSING,*** ISN'T IT?

I COULD GET SO ***CONFUSED.***

BUT, ***PLEASE,*** DON'T WORRY. I KNOW WHAT ***YEAR*** IT IS. EVERYONE DOES.

HMM.

WELL, YOU KNOW, HON, SOMETIMES IT ***SCARES*** ME TOO. I'M WRITING IT ON A CHECK, AND I WANT TO ASK THE GUY NEXT TO ME AT THE BANK, THIS ***CAN'T*** BE RIGHT.

I JUST DON'T WANT TO FACE THAT IT'S ACTUALLY ***1963.*** JUST SAYING IT SOUNDS FUNNY.

I MEAN, ***1963?*** ARE WE IN THE ***FUTURE?*** IS IT WORLD PEACE AND ALIENS AND ROCKET SHIPS AND ***TIME-WARPING*** MONSTERS?

AH, FUCK!

CRACK!SH!

OH NO, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, *SWEETS?!* IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?!

I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO BRING UP THE YEAR, I *SHOULDN'T* HAVE, I'M SORRY.

IT'S *FINE,* DON'T WORRY ABOUT *ANYTHING.* IT'S ALL *MY* FAULT, I'M TO BLAME.

DON, IT'S--MY *HANDS* SLIPPED. IN THE SOAP.

IT'S JUST A *PLATE.* PEOPLE *BREAK* THEM.

DON'T *BLOW* IT ALL OUT OF PROPORTION.

OKAY.

YEAH, ALL RIGHT, YEAH, *YOU'RE* RIGHT, *I'M* SORRY, GREAT THEN.

I'M *GLAD* TO HEAR THAT. SOAP CAN BE *SO* SLIPPERY SOMETIMES. RIGHT? I GUESS THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT *"SOAP."*

HONEY, WHY DON'T YOU GO GRAB THE *MOP,* AND I'LL GET THESE *BIGGER* PIECES UP.

IT'LL BE ALL CLEAN IN A *JIFF.*

ABSOLUTELY, HON.

ONE *FRESH MOP,* COMING UP!

SEE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO *WORRY* SO MUCH!

IT'S *1963,* AND EVERYTHING IS GOING *WONDERFULLY!*

IT GOT TO THE POINT WHERE I COULD RELAX IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY. GO OUTSIDE AND POUR MYSELF A GLASS OF FRESH LEMONADE.

DON'T.

I'D ALWAYS LOVED LEMONADE ON A WARM DAY. ESPECIALLY WITH A FEW CUBES OF ICE FLOATING IN THE CUP.

SHE HAS IT *COMING.*

I LIKED TO SWIRL IT AROUND IN THE GLASS, WATCH THE ICE CRASH TOGETHER.

IT'S THE *NEIGHBORS'* CAT. THEY'D BE UPSET IF *ANYTHING* HAPPENED.

I LIKED THE NOISE IT MADE. CLINK CLINK CLINK.

THIS ISN'T *HER* HOME. SHE SHOULDN'T *BE* HERE.

GIVE ME THAT *GUN,* IT'S NOT A GAME.

CLINK CLINK CLINK.

BANG

WHO SAID IT WAS A *GAME?*

IT REMINDED ME OF HAPPIER TIMES.

THAT *POOR* LITTLE PUSS.

IT'S NOT *HER* FAULT. SHE'S JUST DOING WHAT A CAT IS *SUPPOSED* TO DO.

JOAN, HONEY!

I FOUND THE *SPELLMANS'* CAT!

ADJUSTING BACK TO LIFE WITH MY FAMILY HAD GONE BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE HOPED! UNLIKE THE LAST FEW TIMES, I WAS LESS NERVOUS AND I JUST FELT MORE LIKE MYSELF THAN I HAD IN A WHILE.

STILL, EVERY NOW AND THEN, I'D GET THAT CERTAIN ELECTRICITY RUNNING THROUGH ME, WHERE I WOULD LOOK AROUND AND THINK ABOUT HOW ALL OF THIS WASN'T HONEST, AT LEAST NOT TO SOMEONE...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

WE ATE TOGETHER EVERY NIGHT AS A FAMILY.

ARE YOU *SURE,* DAD?

THAT WAS OUR ONE RULE, AND I WAS INCREDIBLY PROUD OF IT.

I'VE DONE ENOUGH *HUNTING* TO KNOW A *BULLET* WOUND.

NOT THE *WORST* WAY TO GO. QUICK, AT LEAST.

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE DAY.

SO IS IT A *PROWLER?!*

SHOULD I GET OUT MY *SLINGSHOT,* AND WE CAN TAKE *WATCHES?!* WHEN WE CATCH HIM, WE CAN SEE IF THERE'S A *REWARD!*

WHETHER DAVID HAD PRACTICE, OR TIMMY WAS OVER AT A FRIEND'S, OR DON HAD TO WORK LATE ON A CASE...

NO, *SON,* PROBABLY SOME KIDS NOT MUCH BIGGER THAN YOU *MESSING* AROUND. THEY WON'T BE BACK WOULD BE MY GUESS.

PEOPLE MAKE *AWFUL* MISTAKES WHEN THEY'RE YOUNG, I HOPE *YOU* TWO BOYS CAN *LEARN* FROM THIS.

THERE'S NO *PROFIT* IN BEING CRUEL. ESPECIALLY TO A *HELPLESS* ANIMAL.

WE WOULD MAKE TIME FOR ONE ANOTHER.

WILL YOU PLEASE PASS THE *PEAS,* DAVID?

I LOOKED FORWARD TO IT EVERY DAY. IT KEPT ME GROUNDED.

I DON'T KNOW *ANYBODY* WHO'D DO A THING LIKE THAT, NOT THE FELLOWS *I* KNOW.

MAYBE YOU'D TAKE A SHOT AT A *SQUIRREL* OR A BIRD WITH YOUR .22. I HEARD ABOUT *STUFF* LIKE THAT, I GUESS.

BUT A *CAT* IN ANOTHER PERSON'S YARD. THAT'S *CRAZY.*

HAM

Best in State!

THEY *FOUND* THE CAT.

YOU *HAVE* TO BE MORE CAREFUL.

HOME-MADE SAUSAGE 20¢ LB

I DIDN'T SHOOT NO CAT.

CAN I HELP YOU, MA'AM?

HI. COULD I PLEASE GET A POUND OF *SIRLOIN?* CUT LEAN AS YOU CAN. HUSBAND'S WATCHING THE *WAISTLINE.*

WHAT DID THOSE *DOCTORS* TELL YOU ALL THOSE TIMES?

HAM

POUND OF SIRLOIN. *LEAN.* COMING UP.

THERE AIN'T NO *ROMANCES* THAT KEEP GOING AND GOING. THERE AIN'T NO *COWBOY* SHOOTING YOU IF YOU TRY TO RUN.

THERE'S JUST JOAN AND DON AND TIMMY AND DAVID AND A *HAPPY,* NICE LIFE LIVED *FOREVER* AFTER.

THAT'LL BE ALL?

YOU *REMEMBER,* THAT'S WHY THEY LET YOU *OUT.*

'CAUSE YOU *FINALLY* ADMITTED THE *DAMN* TRUTH.

LOVE *IS* EVERLASTING.

YES.

IT *SHOULD* BE ENOUGH, I THINK.

THANK YOU.

A MONTH PASSED, AND I STOPPED THINKING ABOUT THAT CAT.

WHICH WAS A GREAT RELIEF.

BUT, AND THIS TOOK ME SOME TIME TO LEARN, SOMETIMES NOT THINKING ABOUT THINGS ISN'T ENOUGH TO MAKE THEM GO AWAY.

AAAAAAAAA!

NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY.

AAAAAAAAA!

THAT'S *TIMMY!*

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

TIMMY, I'M *COMING,* IT'S JUST A *NIGHTMARE!*

MOMMY'S COMING!

AAAAAAAAA!

HE WAS JUST SOAKED WITH SWEAT.

IT'S OKAY, HONEY, ***MOMMY'S*** HERE, IT'S JUST A ***DREAM,*** IT'LL GO AWAY, POP LIKE A BUBBLE. GIVE IT A SECOND, AND YOU'LL SEE. ***POP*** AND GONE.

AAA!
AAA!
AAA!

I SAT NEXT TO HIM, AND HE CLUNG ONTO ME.

IT WAS THE ***CAT*** HE WAS COMING FROM THE YARD AND HE WAS COMING INTO THE ***HOUSE*** AND HE WAS ***COMING*** AND HE WAS ***BLEEDING*** AND HE WAS ON MY BED...

AS IF THE FLOOD HAD COME, AND I WAS NOAH'S ARK.

SHHH, SHHHH, THERE'S NO ***CAT*** HERE, SWEETIE. IT'S JUST ***ME.***

JUST ***YOU*** AND ***ME,*** IT'S OKAY.

AND I THOUGHT, THIS...

HE WAS COMING ***UP*** AND LOOKING AT ME AND ***BLOOD*** WAS IN HIS HEAD AND HE WAS ON MY ***FEET*** AND THEN ON MY CHEST AND THEN HIS ***NAILS*** WERE ON MY NECK AND THEN HIS ***HEAD*** WAS HERE AND HE WAS ***SCRATCHING*** ME AND HE SAID...

...THIS IS LOVE.

I LOVE YOU.

AND I TRIED NOT TO CRY.

OH, OH, ***SWEETIE,*** DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, NO, NO, NO.

THAT'S NOT--IT'S NOT ***REAL.***

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THINGS THAT AREN'T ***REAL.***

IT DOESN'T MAKE ***SENSE.*** I DON'T ***HAVE*** A GUN.

IT ***WASN'T*** ME.

DON'S GOT A GUN, UNDER THE BED.

SO WHAT? IT'S IN A ***LOCKBOX.*** THERE'S A ***COMBINATION.***

I CAN'T GET IT OPEN.

FOUR LEFT, TWO RIGHT, TWO LEFT. FOUR TWENTY-TWO. DAVID'S ***BIRTHDAY.***

FINE, BUT JUST BECAUSE ***YOU*** KNOW IT, DOESN'T MEAN ***I*** DO.

HHHH

A FEW MORE NIGHTS WENT BY AND I COULDN'T SLEEP.

click

DON, DEAR, I'M *SORRY* TO WAKE YOU.

BUT I NEED TO *TELL* YOU SOMETHING.

I KEPT WAITING TO HEAR TIMMY'S SCREAM.

MM. HONEY...

CAN IT WAIT UNTIL *MORNING?*

THE CAT GETTING INTO HIM AGAIN.

DON...

I...

I HAD TO DO SOMETHING.

I WAS THE ONE.

HE DIDN'T DESERVE THAT.

I KILLED THE CAT. I *SHOT* THE CAT, I MEAN.

IT *WAS* ME.

I WAS HIS MOTHER.

SHIT.

OR AT LEAST I PRETENDED TO BE.

JOANIE...

I *KNOW.*

WHAT?

WHAT ARE WE *SUPPOSED* TO DO, JOANIE? IS THERE A *CHOICE* HERE?

WE SEND YOU *BACK* AGAIN? WHERE DOES *THAT* GET US? I CAN'T *AFFORD* MORE HOSPITALS. I'VE GONE THROUGH OUR *SAVINGS.*

SO WE'RE ALL PEOPLE IN YOUR *ROMANCE* STORY? SO *WHAT?* THE BOYS DON'T GET A *MOTHER?* YOU'RE *NOT* MY WIFE?

BUT...

THE *CAT'S* DEAD.

GO TO *SLEEP.*

YOU...

DON...

YEAH.

YEAH, OKAY.

JESUS CHRIST!

JOAN...

DAYS BECAME WEEKS BECAME MONTHS. I MELTED INTO THE EVERYDAY OF OUR LIVES. GETTING THE KIDS TO SCHOOL. MAKING THE MEALS. DOING THE CHORES. CARING FOR THE HOUSE. CARING FOR DON.

AFTER A WHILE IT ALL STARTED TO FEEL, WELL, IT ALL STARTED TO BECOME NORMAL, EVEN PLEASANT. IT WAS AS IF, WITH ENOUGH TIME AND PATIENCE, YOU CAN FORGET THAT YOU'RE...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

SIGH

A WEEK LATER, DAVID HIT THE WINNING SHOT AT HIS GAME!

I WAS SO PROUD OF HIM!

MOM, QUIT IT! THE OTHER GUYS ARE *ALL* LOOKING!

WELL, THERE YOU GO.

YOU CAN PLAY *SUPERB* DEFENSE ON THE FLOOR, DAVID, BUT STOPPING *YOUR* MOTHER FROM LOVING YOU IS A *WHOLE* OTHER GAME ALTOGETHER!

AFTERWARDS, WE WENT FOR CONES AT THE SODA SHOP. TIMMY HAD ICE CREAM ALL OVER HIS CHIN AND SHIRT. I WAS GOING HAVE TO THROW HIM IN THE TUB AS SOON AS WE GOT HOME.

YOU HAVE TO LICK ON THE *OUTSIDE,* AROUND THE EDGE, OR ELSE IT'S ALL GOING TO *DRIBBLE* DOWN ON YOU, SON.

I'M *DOING* THAT!

HAHAHAHAHA

BUT DESPITE THE MESS, IT WARMED MY HEART, JUST HAVING EVERYONE TOGETHER LIKE THAT, LAUGHING AND ENJOYING ONE ANOTHER.

NOW, HOW EXACTLY IS *THIS* SUPPOSED TO WORK?

BEFORE WE KNEW IT, THERE WAS SNOW ON THE GROUND AND EVERYONE WAS WAITING FOR JOLLY OLD SAINT NICK TO SLIDE DOWN THE CHIMNEY.

CHRISTMAS IS MY FAVORITE TIME OF THE YEAR. THE TREE, THE DECORATIONS, THE ORNAMENTS, THE SONGS EVERYWHERE.

I'VE BEEN A *GOOD* BOY THIS YEAR, HAVEN'T I?

JINGLE BELLS, JINGLE BELLS...

IT'S THE ONLY TIME OF THE YEAR WHERE YOU FEEL BOTH YOUNG AND OLD AT THE SAME TIME.

WHAT'S COMING FOR *ME?*

I KNOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE A CONTRADICTION, AND MAYBE IT IS.

JINGLE ALL THE WAY.

JOAN? JOAN, DID YOU HEAR ME?

BUT SO WHAT? IT'S OKAY TO BE TWO THINGS AT ONCE.

JOAN? YOU CAN'T *IGNORE* ME.

I MEAN, WHO'S TO SAY IT'S NOT?

OH, WHAT FUN IT IS TO RIDE ON A ONE-HORSE OPEN SLEIGH!

I'M AS MUCH HERE AS *YOU* ARE.

LUCKILY, WE WERE ABLE TO GET A SITTER AND GET AWAY FOR NEW YEAR'S.

I *LOVE* YOU, JOAN.

DON, IT'S...

TEN!

NINE!

EIGHT!

SEVEN!

YOU CAN SAY IT, DEAR, I *WON'T* DISAPPEAR.

I *PROMISE.*

SIX!

FIVE!

FOUR!

THREE!

TWO!

ONE!

I...

HAPPY NEW YEAR, DON.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HAPPY NEW YEAR, MY DARLING.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HAPPY 1963!

FINALLY, ROUTINES BECAME ROUTINE.

HURRY, *HURRY!* YOU'LL MISS THE BUS AND, DON, THERE'S *TRAFFIC!* I LET YOU SIT AT BREAKFAST *WAY* TOO LONG! WHEN WILL I *LEARN?!*

ALL *RIGHT,* HONEY! WE'RE *GOING!*

AND ISN'T THAT ALL LIFE IS, REALLY? IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT.

HAVE A *GOOD* DAY! AND *HURRY!*

YOU *TOO,* SWEETIE! LOVE YOU!

FINDING THOSE MOMENTS THAT YOU WANT TO REPEAT AGAIN AND AGAIN.

WE'RE HAVING *STEAK* FOR DINNER! BE ON TIME!

NO ONE LIKES *COLD* STEAK!

FINDING OUT WHERE YOU ARE MOST COMFORTABLE.

AND HAVING FAITH THAT YOU CAN STAY THERE FOREVER.

WHAT'S THE *COMBINATION,* AGAIN?

JOAN, YOU *DON'T* WANT TO DO THIS.

IT WAS *DAVID'S* BIRTHDAY. FOUR TWENTY-TWO.

I REMEMBER.

IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY *YESTERDAY* WE WERE RUSHING TO THE HOSPITAL.

DON WAS *INSANELY* NERVOUS. *HE* COULDN'T DRIVE, SO I HAD TO.

I *BARELY* FIT BEHIND THE WHEEL, I WAS JUST TOO BIG.

MY *MOTHER* TOLD ME IT WAS THE *HAPPIEST* DAY OF HER LIFE WHEN I WAS BORN.

A *FEW* OF THE MOTHERS I'VE HAD TOLD ME THAT.

BUT *ME...*

I DIDN'T FEEL A *FUCKING* THING.

BESIDES PAIN.

JOAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK'S GOING TO *HAPPEN* HERE?

WHAT *ALWAYS* HAPPENS. A *NEW* LOVE.

AND IF YOU'RE *WRONG,* IF *THEY'RE* RIGHT?

THEY'RE *NOT.* I *REMEMBER* THEM. ALL THE *BRADS* AND THE *CHADS.*

THAT'S WHO I AM. I'M NOT *HIS* WIFE OR *THEIR* MOTHER. *THAT'S* ME.

JOAN PETERSON. THE GIRL LOST.

IT'S LIKE *I* ALWAYS TELL YOU, *COWBOY.*

LOVE *ISN'T* EVERLASTING.

IT'S *JUST* WHAT'S HERE *TODAY.*

I PUT THE GUN BACK IN THE BOX. I PUT THE BOX BACK UNDER THE BED.

SMELLS *FANTASTIC,* HONEY!

THEN I DID MY SCRUBBING AND DUSTING AND RAN A FEW ERRANDS, GOING TO THE POST OFFICE AND TO THE CORNER STORE.

WELL, IT'S NOT DONE *YET.* AND I'VE GOT TO GET THE *PEAS* OUT OF THE OVEN, AND I MADE A MASH THAT I'M NOT SURE ABOUT...

WHY DON'T YOU CALL THE *KIDS* AND THEY CAN GET *WATERS* ONTO THE TABLE?

I'LL HAVE IT *ALL* READY BY THEN, THE *SPEED* AT WHICH THOSE TWO *SLOTHS* MOVE.

I HAD COOKIES MADE FOR THE KIDS WHEN THEY GOT HOME. DAVID ATE TWO, BUT TIMMY SAID HE WASN'T HUNGRY, WHICH ISN'T LIKE HIM AT ALL.

WILL *DO,* JOANIE BEAR!

LOVE YOU!

I CHECKED HIS TEMPERATURE, BUT IT ALL SEEMED FINE, SO I DECIDED TO WAIT AND SEE IF ANYTHING ELSE SEEMED OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

YES, YES, LOVE YOU TOO.

BUT LET ME GET THESE *PEAS.*

MY GUESS WAS, BY DINNER, HE'D HAVE HIS APPETITE BACK.

OH. WELL.

AND THERE WOULD BE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

DOESN'T *THAT* LOOK JUST *PERFECT.*

TO BE CONTINUED.

YOU'RE HERE SO OFTEN, ***MRS. PETERSON!*** YOU'RE SUCH A ***WONDERFUL*** WIFE!

SO ***KIND...*** THANK ***GOODNESS*** THEY DON'T KNOW THE ***FRIGHTENING*** TRUTH!

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

TOM KING
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DAVID WAS GETTING MARRIED, AND WE WERE GETTING DRESSED TO MEET THE SOON-TO-BE IN-LAWS FOR THE FIRST TIME. I HAD BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT IT ALL DAY TO DON. IT JUST SEEMED TO ME THAT THEY WERE TOO YOUNG!

DON KEPT REMINDING ME THAT DAVID IS TWENTY-FOUR, AND THAT WE WERE ONLY TWENTY WHEN WE TIED THE KNOT. BUT THAT SEEMED DIFFERENT TO ME. DAVID IS STILL SO...SO NAÏVE, HE DOESN'T KNOW THAT SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER TO BE...

=COUGH=
=COUGH=
=COUGH=

DON, DEAR, ARE YOU *OKAY?*

I *DON'T* LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT *COUGH.*

IT'S *NOTHING.*

:COUGH: :COUGH:

JUST :COUGH: *ALLERGIES.*

WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR *THIRTY* YEARS.

SINCE WHEN DO *YOU* HAVE ALLERGIES?

Soft

IF I *REMEMBER* CORRECTLY, YOU *MISSED* SOME OF THAT TIME.

IT'S *ALLERGIES,* SWEETIE. USED TO BE EVEN *WORSE* WHEN I WAS A KID. THEY'D HAVE TO *HOLD* ME OUT OF SCHOOL.

NOW, *C'MON,* WE'RE GOING TO BE *LATE.* WE GOT TO GET THIS *TRAIN* ON THE TRACK.

JESUS, DON!

IS THAT *BLOOD?!*

NO, IT'S...*JOAN,* PLEASE!

DON'T *WORRY.* I DON'T WANT YOU *WASTING* YOUR TIME ON ALL THAT.

I'M *ABSOLUTELY* FINE.

DO YOU THINK...

MAYBE WE *SHOULDN'T* GO.

DON WASN'T HEARING IT. WE'D HAD THE RESERVATION FOR A WEEK, HE SAID, AND WE PROMISED DAVID WE WOULD, AND DID I REALLY WANT TO LET EVERYONE DOWN?

SO...AWAY WE WENT! AND, IN ALL HONESTY, WE HAD A VERY PLEASANT TIME.

IT TURNS OUT THE DRAKES LOVED PINOCHLE, WHICH WE ALSO ADORE.

WE TALKED ABOUT THE HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR PAST GAMES AND ALL AGREED TO PLAY TOGETHER AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE.

BY THE TIME DESSERT CAME, I HAD ALL BUT FORGOTTEN ABOUT DON'S ATTACK IN THE BATHROOM.

INSTEAD, I WAS FOCUSED ON WHEN AND WHERE THIS BEAUTIFUL WEDDING WOULD BE HELD.

AFTER THE MEAL, WHILE WE WERE WALKING TO OUR CAR, DON LOST HIS BREATH. I RUBBED HIS BACK AND WAITED FOR IT TO PASS.

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, GET IT ALL ***OUT.***

=COUGH= =COUGH= =COUGH= =COUGH=

WE GOT IN THE CAR AND DROVE BACK. HE DIDN'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO WASH THE BLOOD OFF OF HIS HAND, AND HE WOULDN'T TAKE THE TISSUE I OFFERED HIM.

=COUGH=

JUST ***ALLERGIES.***

IT GOT BETTER FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. AT LEAST, I THOUGHT SO.

HONEY?!

=COUGH=

DOES *THIS* MATCH?

BUT I DID START TO NOTICE THAT HE WAS EATING LESS. BEFORE THEN, DON HAD ALWAYS PRACTICALLY LICKED HIS PLATE CLEAN.

DON, YOU BARELY *TOUCHED* IT.

I WASN'T *HUNGRY,* SWEETIE, I GRABBED A *LATE* SNACK WITH FRANK!

AND AT TIMES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, HE'D HAVE TROUBLE SLEEPING AND WOULD SNEAK DOWNSTAIRS, MOVING SO QUIETLY, VALIANTLY TRYING NOT TO WAKE ME.

BUT AFTER HE LEFT, I WOULD LIE IN BED AND LISTEN FOR HIM. HOPING I DIDN'T HEAR HIM COUGHING IN THE BATHROOM.

OF COURSE, I'D ASK HIM HOW HE FELT, AND HE'D GIVE ME A RAKISH SMILE, CLAIM I WAS OVERREACTING TO EVERYTHING.

I'D TELL HIM WE SHOULD GO TO THE DOCTOR. IT WAS TIME FOR AN APPOINTMENT ANYWAY.

POPCORN

HE'D CHUCKLE, AND SAY AGAIN THAT HE WAS FINE. HE DIDN'T NEED A DOCTOR TO TELL HIM HE WAS FINE.

THEN ONE DAY, WHILE MOWING THE LAWN, HE JUST COLLAPSED.

I WAS UPSTAIRS DOING THE LAUNDRY.

HE LAY THERE FOR ALMOST AN HOUR BEFORE I REALIZED THAT THE MOWER HAD NEVER STOPPED RUNNING, AND I WENT OUTSIDE TO SEE IF THERE WAS A PROBLEM.

ON MONDAY, WE GOT AN APPOINTMENT WITH HIS REGULAR DOCTOR. THAT MAN SENT US INTO THE CITY TO A SPECIALIST WHO RAN ALL SORTS OF TESTS, REALLY PUTTING DON THROUGH THE WRINGER.

IT WASN'T UNTIL ALMOST TWO WEEKS AFTER THE LAWNMOWER INCIDENT THAT WE GOT SOME OF THE RESULTS BACK.

PLEASE, *MA'AM,* COME IN.

THANK YOU.

AND YOU CAN CALL ME *JOAN.* MA'AM IS MY *MOTHER.*

WELL, *JOAN*, THANK YOU. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO TELL YOUR *HUSBAND* WHAT I'M SEEING IN THESE NUMBERS, AND *HE* SAID HE'D LIKE TO HAVE *YOU* IN HERE TO HEAR THEM TOO.

WHICH IS *PROBABLY* FOR THE BEST. THOUGH *MAYBE* NOT. WHO'S TO SAY?

IS...

...IS IT ALL *THAT* BAD?

WELL, WE HAVE TO REMEMBER IT IS *1963,* SO WE HAVE MORE OPTIONS THAN WE *USED* TO.

BUT *MY* JOB ISN'T TO SUGAR-COAT IT FOR YOU. I'M NOT *SANTA CLAUS.* WISH I WAS.

I DON'T ALWAYS *BRING* YOU WHAT YOU *WANT.*

OH.

I SEE.

LUNG CANCER. STAGE 4. IT HAD ALREADY SPREAD TO HIS...WELL, IT WAS A LONG LIST.

MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS THAT IT WASN'T FAIR.

DON DIDN'T EVEN SMOKE.

THE DOCTOR WENT IN A LOT OF CIRCLES, BUT BASICALLY HE SAID, WITH TREATMENT, DON MIGHT LIVE FOR A YEAR. WITHOUT, MAYBE A FEW MONTHS.

JOAN...

=YAWN=

IT'S *LATE.*

I COULDN'T SPEAK. DON, ON THE OTHER HAND, ASKED ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS.

HIS MAIN CONCERN WAS THE WEDDING. HE SAID HE WANTED TO BE THERE IN GOOD HEALTH.

SORRY, *DEAR!* I'M COMING NOW.

THE DOCTOR SAID THE TREATMENTS WOULD PUT DON IN A TERRIBLY ROUGH STATE.

THE WEDDING WASN'T REALLY AN OPTION.

DON SAID HE'D RATHER HAVE TWO GOOD MONTHS THAN TWELVE BAD.

AND HE, POLITELY, DECLINED HELP.

HE ALWAYS DID THINGS SO POLITELY.

IT TOOK ME A WEEK TO GET UP THE COURAGE TO CALL TIMMY AND TELL HIM.

YEAH, MA? COLLEGE IS GOING SUPER SWELL! BUT MA, THE BOYS ARE ALL HEADED OUT TO A *HOP,* I DON'T HAVE *TIME* TO TALK RIGHT NOW.

IS THERE *ANYTHING* YOU NEED? THAT I CAN HELP *YOU* WITH?

WHAT? IS...

YEAH.

MA, *YEAH.* IS THERE *SOMETHING--*

BUT...

CLICK

YEAH, *YEAH,* MA, OKAY.

HE TOOK IT WELL. HE DIDN'T SAY MUCH.

HE ALWAYS DID REMIND ME OF HIS FATHER.

HE TOO WAS SUCH A GOOD BOY.

TIMMY AND DAVID CAME HOME FOR SUNDAY DINNER THAT WEEK. WHICH NORMALLY WOULD'VE BEEN NICE.

LET ME TELL YOU, ENJOY THOSE COLLEGE YEARS, TIMMY. YOU HAVE ***NO*** IDEA WHAT THEY DO TO YOU WHEN YOU GET OUT!

I'M NOT LIKE ***YOU,*** MAN. I'M NOT GOING TO SETTLE DOWN AND ***MARRY*** THE GIRL NEXT DOOR! I'M GOING TO SEE THE ***WORLD!***

I'M GOING TO DO SOMETHING ***SPECIAL*** AND NEAT!

HAHA. YEAH, THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY...

...***BEFORE*** THEY FIND THE ***RIGHT*** GIRL!

ISN'T THAT ***THE TRUTH,*** JOANIE?

WHAT'S ***THAT,*** DEAR?

I WAS JUST ***SAYING,*** EVERYONE HAS ALL ***SORTS*** OF AMBITIONS PUT IN YOU BY ***THE CREATOR.***

BUT ONCE YOU GET YOURSELF STARTED ON ***REAL*** LOVE...

...WELL, ALL THE WORLD SUDDENLY ***STOPS*** TURNING AND YOU JUST ***STAY*** WHERE YOU ARE.

UHM.

WELL. I DON'T ***KNOW.***

I WOULDN'T ***KNOW*** ABOUT THAT.

THE WORLD SEEMS TO ME TO JUST KEEP ***GOING.***

WHATEVER YOU DO.

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

AS I SAT WATCHING DAVID'S FIANCÉ TRY ON HER ENCHANTING DRESS, I COULDN'T HELP BUT TO THINK OF MY OWN WEDDING THIRTY YEARS AGO. HOW NERVOUS I WAS AS I WALKED DOWN THE AISLE. I WAS BLIND! I HAD NO IDEA WHERE I WAS HEADED.

I REMEMBER JUST THINKING OVER AND OVER THAT ALL OF THIS COULDN'T BE REAL. THAT EVEN IF I WENT THROUGH WITH IT, IT WOULD ALL FADE AWAY. THAT'S JUST WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE...

OH, WHAT DO YOU THINK... ***MOM?*** ISN'T IT ***FETCHING?!*** BUT WILL ***DAVID*** LIKE IT? I WANT HIM TO BE AS ***HAPPY*** AS I AM!

I WANT TO MAKE ***HIM*** AS HAPPY AS ***HE*** MAKES ***ME!***

THE ***POOR*** GIRL! SHE THINKS A ***DRESS*** CAN BRING THEM ***HAPPINESS!*** JUST WAIT UNTIL SHE FINDS OUT ***THE TRUTH!***

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DON STOPPED GOING INTO THE OFFICE. HE TOOK A BAD FALL THERE AND GOT EMBARRASSED AND DECLARED HE'D RATHER WORK FROM HOME.

I THINK HIS WORKMATES SAW WHAT WAS HAPPENING, AND THEY KNEW IT WOULD BE FOR THE BEST IF HE HAD THE REST.

COUGH COUGH

HOW'D SHE *LOOK?*

THOUGH HE TRIED HIS BEST TO KEEP IT ALL NORMAL, MOSTLY DON KEPT TO HIS BED, AND I'D BRING HIM HIS MEALS AND THE PAPER.

THE DRESS FIT HER DIVINELY. SHE'S A ***PRETTY*** GIRL, THAT TRISH. I JUST HOPE DAVID SEES ***MORE*** IN HER THAN ***BEAUTY.***

SURFACES ***TARNISH.*** I'D LIKE THOSE TWO TO ***SHINE*** FOREVER.

EVERY DAY HE SEEMED TO LOSE A HAIR MORE OF HIMSELF. HE WALKED A FEW FEWER STEPS. HIS VOICE SCRATCHED A LITTLE MORE.

WELL, ***YOUR*** BEAUTY HELD PRETTY STRONG.

NOT THAT IT'S ***ALL*** I SAW IN YOU. BUT, HECK, IT'D BE ***ENOUGH!***

WE BOTH ACTED LIKE ADULTS AND PRETENDED NOT TO NOTICE.

WE HAVEN'T REACHED ***FOREVER*** YET.

NO, I ***SUPPOSE*** NOT.

BUT, ***DARN*** IT ALL, WE'RE ***GETTING*** THERE!

DON FELL ASLEEP EARLY. I WENT DOWNSTAIRS TO WATCH TV.

THERE WAS A MOVIE ON FROM TWENTY YEARS AGO, A COWBOY MOVIE.

IT WAS ABOUT A GIRL WHO WAS GETTING MARRIED AND RAN AWAY AT JUST THE LAST SECOND, THROWING HERSELF ONTO A HORSE AND SETTING OUT ACROSS THE PLAINS.

SHE RODE SO WELL, SHE TRAVELED SO FAR.

HER INTENDED TRIED TO FOLLOW HER, BUT BEFORE HE COULD, SHE WAS CAPTURED BY THE NATIVES.

THE BOY RODE HOME AND FETCHED A POSSE, THE DECENT AND RUGGED MEN FROM ALL THE FARMS AROUND.

AND THEY SET OUT TO FREE THE GIRL.

THE NATIVES, OF COURSE, WERE NOT WILLING TO GIVE HER UP SO EASY. A WAR BROKE OUT IN THE ROCKS AND VALLEYS OF THE OLD WEST.

MEN ON BOTH SIDES DIED IN THE MOST HORRIFIC WAYS.

IN THE END, THE BOY FOUND THE GIRL AND THEY EMBRACED LOVINGLY.

THEY KISSED AND THE CREDITS ROLLED.

IT'S NEVER EXPLAINED WHY SHE RAN AWAY IN THE FIRST PLACE. IT'S LIKE THEY ALL JUST FORGOT ABOUT IT IN THE BLOOD THAT FOLLOWED.

I GUESS THAT'S WHY IT'S NOT A VERY GOOD MOVIE.

WITH DON IN BED, I HAD TO DO MOST OF HIS CHORES. WHICH WAS PROBABLY A GOOD THING. PREPARED ME FOR WHAT WAS COMING.

JOAN!

JOAN, WHERE *ARE* YOU?!

DON, WHAT *IS* IT? I'M ONLY *HALFWAY* THROUGH THE LAWN, AND I *STILL* HAVE TO TAKE THE CAR IN.

THEN WE HAVE THE *DRYWALL* MAN COMING AT THREE. I HAVEN'T EVEN *STARTED* TO CLEAN OUT THE DEN, AND YOU KNOW HOW *OVERLOADED* IT IS.

YOU SHOULD...

DON?!

I NEED YOU...

...TO TAKE MY...THE SUIT TO THE--

:COUGH:
:COUGH:
:COUGH:

WHAT THE *HELL* ARE YOU DOING?!

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IN *BED!* WHERE ARE YOUR *CLOTHES,* FOR GOD'S SAKE?!

I TRIED ON MY TUX FOR THE WEDDING...AND IT'S TOO BIG...

ALL MY... STUFF IS JUST... *FALLING* OFF...

I NEED *YOU* TO...TO GO TO...TO THE *TAILOR'S...*

DON, YOU CAN'T JUST GET UP AND *PUT* THINGS ON.

I NEED TO--

EVERYTHING IS FALLING OFF!

I WENT THAT AFTERNOON TO HAVE HIS TUX TAKEN IN. THE WOMAN AT THE FRONT ASKED HOW MUCH, I SAID I DIDN'T KNOW, AND ASKED HER TO DO HER BEST.

MY HUSBAND COULDN'T COME IN FOR A FITTING.

=COUGH= =COUGH= =COUGH=

=COUGH= =COUGH= =COUGH=

WE TRIED IT ON A FEW DAYS LATER.

IT WAS STILL TOO BIG.

FINALLY, THE BIG DAY ARRIVED.

DAVID AND TRISH.

JOINED AS ONE.

WE HAD GIVEN OUR TOAST TO THEM AT THE REHEARSAL DINNER THE NIGHT BEFORE.

DON SPOKE IN A SURPRISINGLY STRONG VOICE, TELLING THE YOUNG COUPLE ABOUT THE GREAT FUTURE THEY WOULD HAVE TOGETHER.

HE WENT ON AT LENGTH ABOUT ALL THE KIDS AND LAUGHTER AND BLISS THAT WERE SOON COMING THEIR WAY.

IT WAS ALL OUT THERE IN FRONT OF THEM, HE SAID, WAITING FOR THEM, AN EPIC AND JOYFUL JOURNEY THEY WOULD TAKE TOGETHER, ALWAYS WALKING HAND IN HAND.

WHEN IT WAS MY TURN, I SIMPLY RAISED MY GLASS AND SAID...

"MAY YOUR LOVE BE LIKE MINE...

"...EVERLASTING."

AT THE RECEPTION, DON INSISTED ON DANCING. I SENSIBLY OBJECTED, AND HE SAID HE ONLY WANTED ONE SWING AROUND THE ROOM, AND AFTER THAT WE WOULD REST.

HOW COULD I SAY NO?

REMEMBER OUR *FIRST* DATE?

THERE WAS *DANCING.*

I *REMEMBER.*

NOT WITH *ME* THOUGH. I WAS JUST IN THE CORNERS, *WATCHING* YOU.

I CAN STILL *SEE* YOU THEN, YOU WEREN'T LIKE *ANYTHING* ELSE.

EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE WAS TAME, AND YOU, *JOAN PETERSON,* YOU WERE *WILD.*

NEXT THING I KNEW, WE WERE IN FRONT OF YOUR *PARENTS'* HOUSE OUT ON *OAK,* AND YOU ASKED ME TO *MARRY* YOU.

AND THEN...AND *THEN...*

WELL.

THEN WE WERE *HERE.*

THE DAY AFTER THE WEDDING, THE HAPPY COUPLE WENT OFF ON THEIR HONEYMOON.

THE DAY AFTER THAT, DON COULDN'T CATCH HIS BREATH, AND I CALLED FOR AN AMBULANCE. THEY ARRIVED QUICKLY AND SAID THEY NEEDED TO TAKE HIM TO THE HOSPITAL.

I RODE WITH HIM IN THE BACK, HOLDING HIS HAND AS WE WENT. HIS FINGERS WERE COLD.

IT'S GOING TO BE ***ALL RIGHT.***

THEY JUST NEED TO ***CHECK*** UP ON YOU.

AFTER WE GOT THERE, THEY GAVE HIM SOME MEDICINE AND SOME FLUIDS. HE SEEMED TO RECOVER WELL.

IT WAS A ***SPLENDID*** WEDDING, WASN'T IT? BUT NOT HALF AS ***SPLENDID*** AS OURS!

THAT'S NOT ***EXACTLY*** THE WAY I RECALL IT.

THE DOCTORS SAID HIS CONDITION WAS STABLE. I CALLED TIMMY FROM THE LOBBY AND TOLD HIM HE COULD COME IN THE MORNING.

TIMMY SOUNDED SCARED ON THE PHONE, BUT HE SAID HE WAS DOING WELL AND LOOKED FORWARD TO SEEING EVERYONE.

UNFORTUNATELY, DON PASSED AWAY THAT NIGHT.

I DIDN'T CRY WHEN THE DOCTOR CAME INTO THE ROOM. NOT A TEAR. NOR DID I CRY WHEN I WENT AND PHONED DAVID AND TIMMY AND LET THEM KNOW THEIR FATHER WAS GONE.

AS WE ARRANGED FOR HIS FUNERAL, PICKED OUT HIS COFFIN, CHOSE HIS GRAVE SITE, I LISTENED AND NODDED AND MADE DECISIONS, BUT I NEVER CRIED. I WONDERED IF SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH ME. WAS I EVEN HUMAN, OR WAS I JUST...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

I HAVE TO GO DOWNSTAIRS FOR THE *FUNERAL.* THEY'LL WANT ME TO *SAY* SOMETHING. BUT I HAVE *NOTHING* TO SAY!

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
ARTIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

DAVID AND TIMMY WERE WAITING FOR ME AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS.

OH, DON'T YOU TWO LOOK SO HANDSOME.

DAVID HAD COME HOME FROM HIS HONEYMOON FOR THIS. HE DIDN'T HAVE A BLACK SUIT AND WAS WEARING ONE OF HIS FATHER'S. IT FIT HIM PERFECTLY.

THANKS, MOM.

YEAH, THANKS.

I KISSED MY YOUNGEST AND FELT HIM BLUSH.

I'M *GLAD* YOU'RE HERE.

HE WAS SO *PROUD* OF YOU.

THEN I TOOK MY OLDEST BY THE ARM.

OF *BOTH* OF YOU.

SHALL WE?

AND WE LEFT TO BURY MY HUSBAND.

WHEN IT IS SAID *"DUST TO DUST,"* THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE ONE WITH THE DIRT OR THAT WE ARE THE ***SAME*** AS THE DIRT.

WHAT IT ***TRULY*** SIGNIFIES IS THAT WE ARE ONE WITH THE ***WORLD,*** ONE WITH THE ***LORD ON HIGH.***

THIS IS THE ***ORIGIN*** OF US AND THE ***END*** OF US. HE MADE US. WE ARE ***HIS*** GLORY. HE IS OUR ***FATHER*** AND HE ***ALLOWED*** US TO WANDER AWAY FROM HIM.

BUT TO OUR ***FATHER,*** WE SHALL ALL ONE DAY ***RETURN.*** FOR OUR FATHER ***LOVES*** US.

DAD REALLY LIKED ***BASKETBALL.*** HE ***LOVED*** PLAYING IT WITH ME AND MY BROTHER. IN THE ***BACKYARD*** OR IN THE PARK OR IN THE GYM.

AND HE LOVED ***WINNING.*** HE WAS OVER-THE-TOP ***COMPETITIVE.*** BUT THE THING IS...HE ***NEVER*** WON, WITH ***US,*** ME AND TIM.

HE WOULD ALWAYS LET US WIN. I THINK 'CAUSE HE KNEW ***WE*** KNEW HOW GOOD HE WAS, AND HE WANTED...HE WANTED US TO KNOW THAT ***HE*** KNEW...THAT HE LOVED US.

WHATEVER HE WANTED, HE WANTED ***EVERYONE*** ELSE TO KNOW HE ***LOVED*** THEM.

THERE WAS THIS TIME WHEN WE WERE CAMPING, AND IT WAS QUIET AND ***SO*** MANY STARS WERE OUT AND I ***ASKED*** DAD, WHAT IS IT? WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

AND HE DIDN'T ANSWER FOR A ***GOOD*** WHILE. HE HAD AN ANSWER FOR ***EVERYTHING***--IF YOU KNEW HIM, YOU KNEW ***THAT,*** SO IT WAS A ***WEIRD*** QUIET.

THEN HE JUST SAID...

...IT HAS TO BE ***LOVE,*** RIGHT?

WHAT ***ELSE*** COULD IT BE?

DON WAS...

THERE WERE *A LOT* OF BOYS WHO...

AND *DON* WAS...HE...

DON WAS *ONE* OF THEM.

THANK YOU.

I'M SORRY.

THEY DROVE HIS BODY TO THE GRAVE.

THEY LOWERED THE COFFIN INTO THE GROUND.

THERE WAS A PILE OF DIRT THERE, AND THEY TOLD US TO TAKE A HANDFUL AND THROW IT IN.

AND SO WE DID.

AND THEY SAID IT WAS DONE. THEY WOULD FILL IN THE REST.

WE LEFT, WALKING ACROSS ALL THAT PRETTY GRASS.

WE WENT TO LIVE OUR LIVES, TO WADE INTO THE ANGUISH AND ECSTASY OF THE MANY YEARS TO COME. TO TRIUMPH AND FAIL AND TRIUMPH AGAIN.

WE LEFT.

AND DON STAYED BEHIND.

I STILL DIDN'T CRY.

A FEW DAYS LATER, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY, THE PHONE RANG. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A SOLICITOR, SOMEONE OFFERING ME A NEW OVEN.

I DIDN'T NEED A NEW OVEN.

RINNG RINNG

IT WASN'T THAT.

HELLO?

HELLO, THIS IS **SUNWAYS SERVICES MORTUARY,** I'M LOOKING FOR MRS. DON--

YES, THAT'S ***ME.*** IS THIS ABOUT MY ***HUSBAND,*** IS THERE A PROBLEM?

NO PROBLEM, **MA'AM.** JUST WANTED TO OFFER YOU AN **OPPORTUNITY.** WE SHOULD'VE DISCUSSED THIS **EARLIER,** BUT IN A TIME OF GRIEF, IT'S HARD TO PUT **EVERYTHING** ON THE TABLE.

YES?

WELL, SINCE YOUR **HUSBAND** IS BURIED HERE WITH US, AND WE HAVE HIS GRAVE MARKER CHOSEN AND THE **WRITING** ON IT. THAT YOU AND YOUR SONS CHOSE.

"LOVING FATHER AND HUSBAND."

WHAT **I** CAN OFFER YOU THEN IS, OBVIOUSLY, YOU'LL HAVE THE PLOT **NEXT** TO YOUR HUSBAND, YOU'LL SHARE THE HEAD MARKER, AND WE CAN ACTUALLY DO **BOTH** OF THE ENGRAVINGS NOW.

ADD THE **DATES** IN LATER, OBVIOUSLY. BUT IT'S A BETTER **PRICE** TO HAVE IT DONE **THIS** WAY.

I'LL JUST NEED TO KNOW WHAT **YOU** WANT WRITTEN ON **YOUR** END.

"I MEAN, AS YOU WELL KNOW, THE **EASIEST** THING WOULD BE TO SAY WHAT **HE** SAID. IT'S OUR MOST COMMON ENGRAVING.

"WITH IT, OF COURSE, CHANGED TO REFLECT **YOU.**

"'LOVING MOTHER AND WIFE.'

"IS THAT **SUITABLE** TO YOUR TASTES? I DON'T MEAN TO TAKE UP TOO MUCH OF YOUR TIME. I KNOW YOU'RE VERY BUSY. THIS CAN BE A **BUSY** TIME.

"MA'AM. IF **THAT** WORKS WE CAN BE **DONE** WITH IT NOW.

"MA'AM?

"MA'AM, I'M SORRY, DOES THAT **WORK** FOR YOU? THAT **SAME** WORDING? I KNOW IT'LL BE WITH YOU FOR, WELL, FOR A **LONG TIME,** SO IT IS UP TO **YOU.**

"WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO **REPEAT** IT?

"'LOVING MOTHER AND WIFE.'"

NO, *UHM,* SORRY, SIR...

NO, I DON'T THINK *THAT* WILL DO.

YOU SEE...

I *NEVER* DID *LOVE* HIM.

MA'AM, EXCUSE ME, I DON'T THINK I ***UNDERSTOOD,*** *WHAT DID YOU--*

CLICK

TO BE CONTINUED.

10

JOAN, MY DARLING, PROMISE ME IT WILL ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS!

AND NO MATTER HOW MANY CRUEL YEARS PASS, WE WILL FOREVER BE YOUNG AND IN LOVE!

TOO HIP TO LOVE

DAVID AND TRISH NAMED THEIR THIRD AFTER ME--JOAN. SHE WAS THE SWEETEST CHILD FROM THE SECOND SHE CAME INTO THIS WORLD. SHE SLEPT THROUGH THE NIGHT, ATE WELL, COOED AND SMILED AT ANYONE AND EVERYONE.

WHICH IS TO SAY, DESPITE HER NAME, SHE HAD VERY LITTLE IN COMMON WITH HER GRANDMOTHER. THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN THIS DARLING CHILD THAT WAS...

OH, MY *LITTLE* ONE, HOW SCARED I AM OF WHAT YOU MUST FACE IN YOUR *OWN* LIFE, AND YET HOW *EAGER* I AM TO SEE YOU DO IT!

AND SO YOU SEE YOU ARE LIKE *EVERY* WOMAN, BORN INTO THE *CONTRADICTION* OF OTHERS, FATED TO UNTIE *KNOTS* MADE NOT BY YOUR OWN HAND!

TOM KING
WRITER

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COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

YEARS PASSED QUICKLY IN THOSE DAYS.

AFTER COLLEGE, TIMMY JOINED THE NAVY AND SAILED AROUND THE WORLD. HE WAS VERY DILIGENT IN HIS CORRESPONDENCE, BUT I MISSED HIS PUPPY DOG FACE NONETHELESS.

FORTUNATELY, IN 1963, THE WORLD WAS ALMOST AT PEACE AND HE WAS RARELY IN DANGER.

AFTER A FIVE-YEAR STINT, HE CAME BACK TO HIS HOMETOWN TO SETTLE DOWN.

IT'S BEEN *TOO* LONG, MA! YOU LOOK *GOOD!*

OH, *TIMMY,* ALWAYS SLY, YOU *LIE* SO KINDLY!

I HELPED HIM WITH THE DOWN PAYMENT, AND HE BOUGHT A HOUSE ON HILLBROOK ABOUT HALF A MILE FROM MY PLACE.

HIS FRIEND ROGER FROM THE NAVY LIVED WITH HIM THERE AND HELPED HIM PAY THE MORTGAGE.

TIMMY WORKED IN THE CITY AS A NIGHT WATCHMAN AND TOOK CLASSES AT STATE DURING THE DAY TO BECOME AN ENGINEER.

ROGER RAN A RESTAURANT DOWNTOWN AND WAS AN EXCELLENT COOK.

THEY SEEMED VERY CONTENT TO ME. I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN PROUDER.

AS FOR DAVID, THE OLDER BROTHER, HE NEVER GOT HIS DREAM TO PLAY BASKETBALL IN THE PROFESSIONAL LEAGUES.

HE AND HIS FATHER BOTH MANAGED TO MISS THAT TRAIN.

INSTEAD HE ENDED UP TEACHING MATH AND GYM AT THE LOCAL JUNIOR HIGH. HE WAS ALWAYS TALENTED WITH NUMBERS.

HE COULD COUNT BEFORE HE TURNED FOUR, IF I REMEMBER.

AT NIGHT, HE'D LISTEN TO THE GAME. HIS SON, DANIEL, HAD HIS FATHER'S TALENT AND PASSION FOR IT ALL.

DAVID WOULD BRAG THAT, THOUGH HE NEVER MADE IT BECAUSE OF HIS KNEES, THE WAY DAN PLAYED, THERE WAS ALWAYS A CHANCE WE MIGHT HAVE A FAMOUS ATHLETE IN THE FAMILY.

TRISH SEEMED TO BE WITH CHILD EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY YEAR.

BUT SHE STILL FOUND TIME TO COME BY AND VISIT ME A FEW TIMES A WEEK. SHE WOULD BRING LEMONS FROM HER LEMON TREE.

I SAID I WAS FINE, BUT SHE INSISTED, SAYING THEY WOULD JUST ROT ON THE GROUND IF I DIDN'T TAKE THEM AND DO SOMETHING WITH THEM.

WHAT CHOICE DID I HAVE, REALLY?

AFTER SHE WENT BACK HOME, I'D SIT ON OUR PORCH AND LOOK OUT AT THE BACKYARD.

THE NEIGHBORS HAD GOTTEN ANOTHER CAT. THE FEROCIOUS CREATURE WOULD SNEAK INTO MY GARDEN AND RUSTLE INTO MY FLOWER BED.

AS IF SHE HADN'T HEARD ABOUT THE LIVES LOST BEFORE HERS.

MOST NIGHTS I ATE BY MYSELF. USUALLY I'D MAKE A BATCH OF SOUP ON MONDAY AND WARM IT UP THROUGHOUT THE WEEK. I NEVER HAD A BIG APPETITE.

I'D SIT, I'D SIP, I'D LOOK AROUND AND SEE ALL THE GHOSTS.

TIMMY WITH APPLESAUCE ALL OVER HIS FACE, SHAKING WITH LAUGHTER, MORE AND MORE SAUCE SPREADING EVERYWHERE.

IGNORING MY EVERY ADMONITION AND CONTINUING IN HIS JOY.

DAVID GOING ON ABOUT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS POLICIES ABROAD. PARROTING WHAT SOME PROFESSOR HAD SAID THAT DAY, BUT PRETENDING THE OPINIONS WERE HIS OWN.

POUNDING ON THE TABLE AS EVERYONE SMILED KNOWING JUST WHAT GAME HE WAS PLAYING.

DON, JUST KEEPING HIS QUIET AS THE THREE OF US ENJOYED AN IN-JOKE.

DON READING THE PAPER.

DON COMPLIMENTING MY COOKING.

DON SCUFFING THE BOYS' HAIR.

NO ONE WAS THERE.

AND YET IT ALL FELT SO REAL.

IT ALL WENT BY.

THE YEARS FALLING LIKE PENNIES INTO A WISHING WELL. SPEEDING UP AS THE COOL WATER BELOW GOT NEARER AND NEARER.

I BLINKED AND LITTLE JOAN WAS SIX YEARS OLD.

SHE WAS TELLING ME ABOUT HER FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, HOW MRS. FROSH STARTED WITH THE ALPHABET, BUT SHE WAS TOO SMART FOR THAT.

SHE ALREADY KNEW THE ALPHABET BECAUSE GRANDMA HAD TAUGHT IT TO HER.

THEN, JUST LIKE THAT, SHE WAS SIXTEEN, AND I WAS TEACHING HER HOW TO DRIVE. HER FATHER HAD SAID IT'D GIVE HIM A HEART ATTACK, AND HER MOTHER HAD SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

THEY WERE BOTH DEAD RIGHT.

AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, HER WEDDING. EVERYONE REMARKED THAT SHE LOOKED LIKE ME, AND I TRIED TO DIG UP OLD PHOTOS OF DON AND I GETTING MARRIED.

I FOUND THE ALBUM IN THE ATTIC. THEY WERE RIGHT. THERE WAS QUITE A RESEMBLANCE. WHICH TO ME WAS QUITE AN HONOR.

AND SO, I WAS SOON BACK IN A NURSERY HOLDING ANOTHER JOAN. MY FIRST GREAT-GRANDCHILD.

BORN ON THE FIFTH OF MAY, 1963.

IT WAS ALL GOING SO WELL. THE WORLD WAS KIND AND EASY.

WHEN ON THE WORLD THE MISTS BEGAN TO FALL...

...OUT OF THE **DREAMS** THAT ROSE IN HAPPY **THRONG.**

LOW TO OUR **HEARTS** LOVE SANG AN OLD **SWEET** SONG...

...AND IN THE **DUSK** WHERE FELL THE FIRELIGHT **GLEAM.**

SOFTLY IT WOVE ITSELF INTO OUR **DREAM.**

AAAAH!

JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE LOW...

...AND THE FLICKERING SHADOWS SOFTLY COME AND GO.

THOUGH THE HEART BE WEARY, SAD THE DAY AND LONG...

...STILL TO US AT TWILIGHT COMES LOVE'S OLD SONG.

COMES LOVE'S OLD...SWEET... SONG...

I KNOCKED MY HEAD SOMETHING AWFUL AND THREW OUT MY HIP. ENDED UP IN THE HOSPITAL FOR THREE WEEKS.

MOM, WE NEED TO TALK. THIS IS SERIOUS.

I WORKED HARD TO RECOVER, TO GO BACK TO WHAT I HAD LEFT, SWEATING AND PUSHING THROUGH A THOUSAND AGONIZING EXERCISES.

WELL, LET ME AT LEAST GET YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK.

I CAN'T HAVE COMPANY COMING OVER AND JUST LEAVE YOU DRY.

NOT THAT TIMMY AND DAVID SAW ANY OF THAT.

MA, NO. I CAN GET THE DRINKS.

YOU NEED YOUR REST. IT'S IMPORTANT.

NO, TO THEM I WAS JUST THE OLD WIDOW LIVING BY HERSELF. LIKE A WITCH IN THE OLDEN DAYS.

SO THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE, THEN. THE TWO OF YOU.

JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER.

YOU KNOW WHAT I NEED BETTER THAN I DO. I'VE HEARD THAT SONG BEFORE.

THEY COULDN'T IMAGINE I WAS ANYTHING BUT THAT.

MOM, IT'S A NICE PLACE, AND YOU'LL BE COMFORTABLE THERE. YOU'LL HAVE FOLKS YOUR OWN AGE AROUND YOU. AND THE PEOPLE THERE WILL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU.

YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE ELSE. PLEASE, FOR US, LET TIMMY AND I TAKE SOME OF THE WEIGHT OFF YOU.

A FEW MONTHS LATER, I MADE THE MOVE.

I DIDN'T AGREE WITH THEM, BUT I GOT TIRED OF ARGUING ALL THE TIME. I FIGURED THIS WAS AT LEAST MORE PLEASANT THAN THAT.

ANOTHER SIGN THAT I WAS GETTING LAZY IN MY OLD AGE.

AND *MA'AM,* THIS'LL BE *YOUR* ROOM ENTIRELY.

HOWEVER *YOU* WANT TO TREAT THIS PLACE IS UP TO *YOU.* MAKE IT *YOURS,* BECAUSE IT IS.

BUT WE ARE *ALL* HERE AT YOUR BECK AND CALL. JUST *RING* AND WE RUN. IT'S OUR *MOTTO.*

THAT'S VERY *CONSIDERATE* OF YOU.

BUT *YOU* DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN THE *RULES* TO ME.

I'VE BEEN HERE *BEFORE.* IT LOOKED *SOMEWHAT* DIFFERENT, HAD A DIFFERENT ADDRESS AND NAME.

BUT IT'S *ALL* THE SAME...

WELL, HERE *I* AM AGAIN.

THAT *WAS* A WHILE BACK, THOUGH.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND *WILD.*

IT WAS A PLACE TO WAIT TO DIE. EVERYONE THERE KNEW IT. WE DIDN'T NEED TO TALK ABOUT IT, IT WAS SIMPLY IN THE AIR THAT WE ALL BREATHED, UNTIL ONE OF US DIDN'T. WE PASSED THE TIME BY WATCHING THE TV OR READING A BOOK OR PLAYING A STUPID GAME.

WE HAD DONE OUR LIFE'S WORK AND THE WORLD WAS IN THE HANDS OF OTHERS. WE COULD ONLY HOPE THAT THEY DIDN'T YET KNOW THAT EVERYONE, EVENTUALLY, IS...

TOO HIP FOR LOVE

AND SO *THIS* IS WHAT IT ALL COMES TO! A GAME OF *GUESS* THAT I CAN NEVER WIN! ISN'T THAT *TRAGIC?!* ISN'T THAT *PERFECT?!*

I-14. I-14. WHO HAS *I-14?*

BINGO

BINGO

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

YOU *KNOW,* YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE IN *HELL.*

EXCUSE ME?

BINGO IS A SPORT OF *SUBTLE* STRATEGY. EVERY MOVE LEADING TO A *THOUSAND* OTHER MOVES.

IT TAKES A *SECOND* TO LEARN, BUT A *LIFETIME* TO MASTER. AND I HAVE HAD SUCH A LIFETIME. *THRILLING* AS THAT IS.

YOU MAY *STRIVE* FOR VICTORY, BUT YOU WILL FALL *WELL* BEHIND MY PRACTICED *YAWP.* MY MASTERY OF *BINGO* KNOWS NEITHER LIMITS NOR MERCY.

A CHALLENGE?

A *PROMISE.*

HM.

WE'LL *SEE.*

G-7. WE HAVE G-7 NEXT. WHO HAS *G-7?*

HIS NAME WAS RALPH HORNER.

AND SURE ENOUGH, HE WON.

BINGO!

WE HAD DINNER TOGETHER THAT NIGHT. THEY HAD A RESTAURANT WHERE YOU COULD EAT FOR FREE IF YOU WANTED TO LEAVE YOUR ROOM.

REMEMBER ***FOOD***, LIKE, ***ACTUAL*** FOOD?

VAGUELY.

IS IT ***POSSIBLE*** WE ALREADY SHED OFF OUR ***WRINKLED*** MORTAL COIL AND SOMEHOW ***THIS*** IS HELL?

I SEEM TO RECALL THAT SUNNYBROOK HOME FOR THE RETIRED WAS IN SOME ***DANTE*** BOOK I READ ONCE. BUT MY MEMORY IS ***NOT*** WHAT IT WAS.

NO, THIS ***CAN'T*** BE HELL.

BECAUSE IN ALL MY LIFE OF ***SIN***, I DIDN'T DO ***ANYTHING*** TO DESERVE THIS.

I HAVE A ***THEORY*** ABOUT THAT. I DON'T THINK YOU KNOW IN ***THIS*** LIFE IF YOU'RE SINNING OR NOT. TOO MUCH ***CRAP*** IS CHANGING. MORALS ***FLIPPING*** OVER.

WHEREVER YOU OR I OR ANYBODY ANYWHERE ***END*** UP, I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE SOMETHING ***ENTIRELY*** UNEXPECTED.

WELL, THEN WE ***MUST*** BE ALIVE.

BECAUSE ***EVERYTHING*** HERE IS JUST WHAT ***I*** THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

WE STARTED TO SPEND MORE TIME TOGETHER. HE WAS MY FIRST NEW FRIEND IN DECADES.

I LIKED HIS HUMOR. IT WAS ANCHORED IN A DEEP RESIGNATION ABOUT OUR FATE AND THEREFORE TINTED WITH SADNESS.

I DON'T THINK I HAD EVER LAUGHED SO HARD.

RALPH HAD BEEN A DISTINGUISHED LAWYER AND JUDGE. HE'D ACTUALLY BEEN AN ATTORNEY AT THE NUREMBERG TRIALS.

ALTHOUGH VERBOSE ON MOST TOPICS, ABOUT THIS, ABOUT ALL THOSE HORRORS, HE SIMPLY SAID, HE WISHED HE'D DONE MORE AT THE TIME, AND LEFT IT AT THAT.

HE'D BEEN MARRIED TO A WOMAN NAMED ELLEN AND HAD TWO DAUGHTERS, ONE WHO LIVED IN BOSTON AND ANOTHER IN CALIFORNIA, BOTH LAWYERS LIKE THEIR FATHER.

ELLEN HAD PASSED AWAY SOME TEN YEARS AGO. BREAST CANCER. "SHE WAS A SAINT," *HE SAID.*

I TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT DON AND THE KIDS AND THE GRANDKIDS.

HE ASKED ME IF I HAD EVER HAD A QUIET MOMENT, AND I TOLD HIM NO, BUT I NEVER REGRETTED A SECOND OF ALL THE NOISE. I COULDN'T SLEEP WITHOUT IT.

GOOD NIGHT, ***JOAN.*** MAYBE WE CAN...WE CAN HAVE ***BREAKFAST?*** IF YOU'RE FREE.

I WILL ***CERTAINLY*** CHECK MY SCHEDULE.

IT'S JUST POSSIBLE THERE'S A ***SMIDGE*** OF ROOM FOR A PANCAKE.

ONCE A WEEK, THE NURSE CAME IN TO CHANGE THE BEDDING. SHE WAS A VERY AMICABLE LADY, AND I ENJOYED TALKING WITH HER.

SO...I CAN'T DENY THAT I'VE BEEN SEEING YOU AND ***MR. HORNER*** TOGETHER LATELY.

OFF IN ***EVERY*** CORNER OF THE PLACE, CHITTERING AND CHATTERING. LIKE ***SCHOOL*** KIDS.

DON'T BE ***CRASS,*** MARTY.

I AM A ***MARRIED*** WOMAN.

IS ***THAT*** SO? FUNNY, HAVEN'T SEEN YOUR ***HUSBAND*** AROUND MUCH.

YOU ***MUST*** INTRODUCE ME.

DON WAS A ***GOOD*** MAN, A GOOD ***FATHER,*** A GOOD PARTNER.

'TIL ***DEATH*** DO YOU PART IS NOT JUST A ***ONE***-WAY STREET.

WELL, ***YOU'D*** KNOW BETTER THAN I WOULD, MA'AM.

SAD ***TRUTH*** OF IT IS, IF I ***ADMIT*** IT TO MYSELF...

...I'VE NEVER REALLY ***BEEN*** IN LOVE.

RALPH AND I SPENT MORE AND MORE OF OUR TIME TOGETHER, ENJOYING THE MANY SLOW HOURS OF THE OLD IN ONE ANOTHER'S COMPANY.

ONE DAY, HE ASKED ME HOW I WANTED TO DIE.

I SAID, PROBABLY LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, QUIETLY IN MY SLEEP.

PAINLESSLY. JUST SLIPPING OFF AS YOU DO INTO A DREAM.

HE SAID HE WANTED TO SEE IT COMING. HE WANTED TO LOOK IT RIGHT IN THE EYE AND KNOW WHAT IT WAS.

HE'D STRUGGLED ENOUGH FOR THIS LIFE. IT OWED HIM ONE GLANCE OF WHAT WAS NEXT.

FOR SOME REASON, THIS PROMPTED ME TO TELL HIM I'D HAD SOME PROBLEMS IN MY YOUTH. I HAD CONCOCTED A FANTASY IN MY HEAD OF WHAT THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE WAS.

LOVE EVERLASTING.

I'D HAD TROUBLE LETTING IT GO. IT HAD COST ME YEARS WITH MY FAMILY.

HE TOOK THIS IN AND NODDED SYMPATHETICALLY.

"EVERYONE WALKS THOSE PATHS," *HE SAID.* "ONLY ONES WHO DON'T ARE THE ONES WHO THINK THE WHOLE THING IS A STORY TOLD BY SOMEONE ELSE.

"THAT YOU WENT AND CAME BACK," *HE SAID.* "THAT JUST MEANS YOU'RE HERE."

I LOVE YOU.

WH--

WHAT?

OH, *DAMMIT,* I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO SAY THAT.

I GOT *CARRIED* AWAY. YOU LOOKED SO IMMENSELY *BEAUTIFUL,* AND I WASN'T THINKING WELL AT ALL, JUST *DISTRACTED* BY IT.

I'M AN *OLD* MAN. THINGS *SLIP* OUT OF MY LIPS THAT SHOULD *STAY* INSIDE. THAT'S THE *ACTUAL* CURSE OF ALL THESE YEARS.

THAT... I KNOW *THAT,* YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME.

WE CAN'T *CONTROL* OURSELVES LIKE WE USED TO.

AND...AND *FUCK...*

I GUESS.

I LOVE YOU *TOO.*

IT WAS 1963.

I WAS EIGHTY-SEVEN YEARS OLD.

I'D BEEN A DAUGHTER, A BRIDE, A WIFE, A MOTHER, A GRANDMOTHER, A GREAT-GRANDMOTHER.

I'D DANCED AND CRIED AND LAUGHED AND SCREAMED.

THERE WERE JOYS AND REGRETS AND MISTAKES AND REDEMPTIONS.

I'D LIVED AS WELL AS I COULD.

NO MORE AND NO LESS.

AND NOW...

NOW.

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME.

NOW, I WAS IN LOVE.

I HAD BEEN MODELING FOR PAUL FOR ALMOST A MONTH, COMING EVERY DAY TO HIS STUDIO TO STAND STILL FOR HOURS AS HE CARVED ME OUT OF A BLOCK OF STONE. AND WHILE HIS EYE WAS ALWAYS ON HIS CREATION, MY EYE WAS ON HIM, MY HEART WAS ALWAYS REACHING FOR HIM. BUT I HAD NO IDEA HOW TO TELL HIM, FOR I WAS BRAND NEW TO...

The Art Of Love

PLEASE, *PAUL,* LOOK AT *ME! SEE* ME! I'M NOT A STATUE! I'M A *WOMAN!* I'M REAL AND I'M IN *LOVE!*

Tom King
writer

Elsa Charretier
artist

Matt Hollingsworth
colorist

Clayton Cowles
letterer

RALPH?!

MISS *PETERSON,* YOU HAVE TO HOLD STILL! IT'S VITAL TO THE ENTIRE PROJECT THAT I GET THIS CURVE *EXACTLY* RIGHT.

PLEASE. I REALIZE THE *DIFFICULTY* IN THE SITUATION. I *PROMISE,* IT WON'T BE MUCH LONGER.

WHAT...

NO.

MISS *PETERSON,* AGAIN. PLEASE. I *BEG* OF YOU.

I NEED A *MODEL,* NOT A JACKRABBIT.

A MIRROR.

DO YOU...

DO YOU HAVE A *MIRROR?*

WHAT IN *HEAVENS* DO YOU NEED A MIRROR FOR, MISS PETERSON?

JUST LOOK RIGHT *HERE.*

DO YOU NOT SEE? LOOK AT WHAT I DID FOR YOU.

YOU'RE IMMORTAL.

WHAT'S BETTER THAN THAT?

HE WALKED TOWARD ME.

=SIGH=

NOW, TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, MAYBE YOU'RE ***RIGHT,*** MAYBE IT IS ***PROPER*** TO TAKE A BREAK.

I'VE BEEN ANTSY LATELY TOO. THOUGH I'D ***HOPED*** YOU HADN'T NOTICED.

HE PUT HIS HAND ON MY SHOULDER.

I MUST ***CONFESS,*** AND I AM ***UNFORTUNATELY*** NOT TALENTED WITH WORDS. I'M BETTER WITH ART, BUT IT'S BEEN RATHER TOUCHY, DIFFICULT--***YOU*** HAVE TO SEE THAT.

TO CAPTURE ***YOUR*** BEAUTY.

THAT'S ***ALL,*** THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN SO ***FOCUSED*** ON THE MARBLE AND THE ***HAMMER.***

HE LEANED IN FOR A KISS.

I GUESS THAT IS WHAT ***LOVE*** DOES, SOMETIMES.

IT ***DISTRACTS*** YOU FROM WHAT'S ***REAL.***

WE KISSED, AND I KNEW AS MUCH AS I KNEW ANYTHING THAT I LOVED HIM THAT

JOAN...I... I LOVE YOU...

GNN

YES, *PAUL*, I KNOW.

I LOVE YOU TOO.

I HAD CHILDREN.

THEIR NAMES WERE DAVID AND TIMMY.

I HAD GRANDCHILDREN.

WHAT...

WHY...

GUH

CRA

DANNY,
SARA,
MOLLY.

AND
JOAN.

I HAD GREAT-
GRANDCHILDREN.

TESSA.

JANEY.

JACK.

RUTH.

JOAN.

MY NAME IS JOAN PETERSON.

WHENEVER I FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE, I DISAPPEAR INTO A NEW WORLD.

AND FALL IN LOVE AGAIN.

IF I RUN AWAY, A COWBOY COMES AND KILLS ME.

AND I DISAPPEAR INTO A NEW WORLD AND I FALL IN LOVE AGAIN.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR LIFE IS, I DON'T KNOW WHAT ANYONE'S LIFE IS.

BUT THAT IS MINE.

IT'S KIND OF ROMANTIC.

CR

IF YOU DON'T THINK ABOUT IT.

IT TOOK ME SOME TIME, BUT I FOUND AN OLD PACK IN A DESK DRAWER.

WHAT *YEAR* IS IT?

1947.

WELL, *THAT'S* A REVELATION.

YOU GOT A LIGHT?

THIS FEELS *FAMILIAR.*

DOES IT?

SO?

WHAT ARE WE *WAITING* FOR HERE?

YOU THINK I HAVE ALL THE *TIME* IN THE WORLD?

I GOT AN *ASSIGNMENT.* BEFORE I DO IT...

...YOUR *MOTHER* WANTS TO KNOW...

...DID YOU *LEARN* ANYTHING?

HM.

YEAH, YOU KNOW WHAT?

I THINK I DID.

I LEARNED THAT I'M GOING TO *KILL* YOU.

THEN I'M GOING TO *KILL* HER.

WELL, GET *ON* WITH IT.

I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU *NEXT* TIME AROUND.

TO BE CONTINUED.

BIOS!

An intro to the creative team on LOVE EVERLASTING

TOM KING
Writer

Tom King is a multiple Eisner, Ringo, and Harvey award-winning writer known for his work on *Mister Miracle*, *Batman*, *The Vision*, *The Sheriff of Babylon*, *Strange Adventures*, *The Human Target*, *Superman Up in the Sky*, and many others. His work has appeared on the New York Times best sellers list numerous times. In 2021, King's work on *The Vision* was the inspiration for the hit TV show *WandaVision*. Prior to his writing career, King served overseas in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of war as a counter-terrorism officer in the CIA. He lives in Washington DC with his wife and three children.

ELSA CHARRETIER
Artist

Elsa is a comic book artist and writer. Early in her career, she's illustrated numerous books for DC Comics, Marvel Comics, IDW Publishing, Random House, Disney and Lucasfilm and have now shifted her focus to her independent work, most notably NOVEMBER with Matt Fraction and LOVE EVERLASTING with Tom King (both published by Image Comics). In collaboration with PK Colinet, co-founder of their studio Big Head Little Arms, she's also successfully ran four large Kickstarter campaigns and launched a Comics Case Study YouTube channel.

Matt Hollingsworth
Colorist

Matt Hollingsworth is an award-winning color artist. In his 31 years in the industry, he's worked on *Preacher*, *Hellboy*, *Daredevil*, *Hawkeye* and many other comics. During a brief detour, he worked on visual effects for such movies as *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* and *Serenity*. Born and raised in California, he now lives in Croatia with his amazing wife, awesome son, wiggle-tailed dog, and four fuzzy cats who rule the roost.

CLAYTON COWLES
Letterer

Clayton Cowles is an Eisner and Ringo-nominated letterer. In addition to mainstream titles like *Daredevil*, *X-Men*, and *Batman*, Clayton has worked on ADVENTUREMAN, BITCH PLANET, DIE, MOONSTRUCK, PRETTY DEADLY, REDLANDS, THE WICKED + THE DIVINE, and a host of other books published by Image Comics. He lives in upstate New York in a house with two cats.

COVERS!

A gallery of all the variant covers for LOVE EVERLASTING #6–10

Frances Manapul

Gabriel Walta

Wes Craig

Marley Zarcone

Jesse Lonergan

The mind-bending story of Joan Peterson's journey through love and horror continues in the second epic and heartbreaking arc of this critically acclaimed, Harvey-nominated series.

After traveling from romance to romance, Joan finds herself trapped inside just one story, growing older with the love of her life instead of escaping again and again. And as she becomes a wife, a mother, a grandmother, she is on a bloody quest to discover if everyone in this new world is insane, or if she alone is broken.

SELECT PRAISE FOR *LOVE EVERLASTING, VOL. 1*:

"Subverts the romance-comic genre but still delivers genuine romantic melodrama."

—*LIBRARY JOURNAL* (STARRED REVIEW)

"Romance comics meet *Quantum Leap* in this quirky odyssey through time, space, and the heart... King energizes the familiar romance genre with twists and turns that fuse each of Joan's trysts into an intricate puzzle... Charretier's thick-line cartoony character design, reminiscent of Darwyn Cooke, perfectly depicts this genre crossover, and Matt Hollingsworth's colors capture the eeriness."

—*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY* (STARRED REVIEW)

"Rich themes and deep questions underpin Joan's adventures, as about the true nature of love, the need for it, and the desire for independence and self-realization."

—*FOREWORD REVIEWS*

"A perfectly crafted mystery...like an everlasting episode of *The Twilight Zone*."

—FRANCESCO FRANCAVILLA, *NIGHT OF THE GHOUL*

COLLECTS LOVE EVERLASTING #6-10
Fantasy / Action & Adventure

Rated T+ / TEEN PLUS

SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"